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JOSEPHINE NAPOLEON'S EMPRESS

BY
C. S. FORESTER

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1925

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JOSEPHINE

NAPOLEON'S EMPRESS

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE story reads at first rather like a child's fairy tale. At her christening, one might imagine, the good fairies and the bad were gathered together, quite in the regular style, and every time a good fairy made her a gift, a bad fairy balanced it in an evil fashion.

"She will be beautiful," says one.

"But she will outlive and regret her beauty," says another.

"She will be a Queen, and more than a Queen."

"And less as well."

"Her husband will love her dearly."

"But not for long."

"She will have more jewels and pretty frocks than heart could wish for."

"And she will always be in debt."

"She will have loving children, who will rise to great positions."

"But she will never have the child she longs for most."

The details could be elaborated past all patience, but there is no need to labour the point. To this

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motif the story runs for over forty years. And if it seems, like the artistic productions of the period, to be over-elaborated and over-decorated, there is no need to sneer, merely because fact is beating fiction at its own game. Wild romance, fierce self-seeking, passionate love and unlovely passion, millions of francs at stake as well as millions of lives, thrones going begging, titles and sovereignties scattered broadcast like autumn leaves (and as long enduring), assassination, divorce, and seduction, there is compressed into this brief period all the material for countless sensational novels, or even several numbers of some popular Sunday newspaper.

That is one view of the matter. In itself it would be a poor apology for choosing a hackneyed subject (for that the only excuse must necessarily be the book itself), but the more important point is that the subject is *not* hackneyed. It would be more true to say that it is not hackneyed enough. When one comes to consider that if Josephine had been a woman of more parts than she happened to possess, or if she had been young enough to bear children on her second marriage, the history of the world might have been different, it becomes obvious that a study of Josephine's character is not merely amusing but necessary. If Josephine had been plainer than she was in 1796, when Napoleon first met her, he might never have married her. And if he had not, he might have had an heir by someone else who might have had a better influence on him. And the result of such a combination of circumstances is potentially too vast to calculate. For that matter, a revival in Josephine's complexion in 1809 might have diverted

him from the divorce and the Austrian marriage, and the absence of the Austrian alliance might have deterred him from entering upon the Russian campaign. There are not many occasions obvious in history when upon a woman's charm depends the fate of nations; one should naturally make the most of them when they do appear.

Withal, the fluctuations in the story are so wild, and the extravagance of its incidents is so frantic, that there is no cloak-and-sword novel in the world to compare with it. It is amusing to imagine what the critics would say if Josephine had never existed and some hardy soul were to publish her story as fiction. What a raising of eyebrows there would be! Ruritania at its most melodramatic moments cannot compare with the First Empire.

We must begin by an inquiry into a lady's age. Marie-Joseph-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie (she did not become "Josephine" until long after) was born on June 23rd, 1767, but doubts of all kinds can be thrown upon this statement. Josephine herself was none too particular over the matter, for she gave her age at her second marriage as four years less than it actually was, but in addition there was a good deal of false declaration before that. An illegitimate child was born to one of the Tascher sisters in 1786 or 1789, and the mother gave her name as Marie-Joseph-Rose but with a different date of birth. It is hardly likely that this was Josephine (the matter will be more fully discussed later), but whoever it was, someone, and most likely the same person, was buried five years later under the same name and stated to be of a corresponding date of birth.

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This is a fair sample of the state of affairs in which Josephine first saw the light. There were a good many skeletons in the cupboards of her own family and of that into which she was first to marry. Her father was a shiftless, poverty-stricken planter of Martinique, the colonial-born son of an Orléannais family of the lower nobility, and at the moment of Josephine's birth he was living on the dowry brought him by his wife. His sister, a short time before, had entered into the service of the Sieur de Beauharnais, Governor of Martinique, as companion to the Governor's wife, and, apparently following the example of the ladies of the Court at home, she became his mistress, while he, apparently imitating the sovereign he represented, found for her a nominal and complaisant husband. Beauharnais himself was hardly the fine flower of the French colonial service. By culpable delay occasioned by his anxiety to attend the marriage of this Demoiselle Tascher to M. Renaudin, he succeeded in losing Guadeloupe to the English, and was in consequence recalled. The commanding officer at Guadeloupe was degraded and imprisoned, but Beauharnais, by some means or other (all things were possible at Court under the old régime) managed not only to escape any such treatment, but even obtained for himself a large pension and the title of Marquis. For Tascher he obtained a smaller pension, nominally on account of the latter's services in the defence of Martinique against the English. It was upon this pension, far more than upon their income from their property, that the Tascher family lived during the early years of Josephine's life.

These early years cannot by any manner of means be regarded as constituting the best possible training for an Empress-to-be. For ten years Josephine ran more or less wild. From ten to fourteen she enjoyed the supreme advantages of being educated at a second-rate dames' school at Fort Royal, Martinique. At fourteen she left school and resumed her unoccupied life at home, where she stayed for two years. For the first sixteen years of her life Josephine lived in a sugar-refinery roughly adapted for human habitation, the daughter of a perpetually penurious household, mainly in the society of negroes, and with, apparently, hardly the slightest chance of escape.

There must have been a few incidents, of course. But what these were, and who were involved, is more than anyone can guess at nowadays. Josephine's memory has been too long at the mercy of the professional memoir writer and of the professional panegyrist for anyone to discover the truth about any incident in which she was concerned and for which there is no contemporary evidence. One or two memoirists of the baser sort have hinted that they were personally familiar, or even more than familiar, with Josephine during these early days at Martinique, but they cannot be believed, partly because they are manifestly telling lies in most other parts of their memoirs, but mainly because no man deserves to be believed when he hints at having had such relations with a lady—especially when the fact that that lady subsequently became an Empress is an additional temptation to untruth.

Some of the stories are utterly ludicrous.

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Mme. Lenormand tells a long and involved story about a pure and passionate friendship which Josephine had for a young Englishman in Martinique, and which was prevented from ripening into anything more definite both through parental opposition and stress of circumstances. But the history reads strangely like one of the brief interpolated romances common in the novels of the period, while the fact that the Englishman in question is spoken of as M. de K—— also rather indicates that Mme. Lenormand was drawing on her imagination. Three *Breton* family names out of four begin with K.

Anyway, early development and tropical climate notwithstanding, Josephine can hardly have been involved in any serious affairs at this period. She was under sixteen; her parents were desperately poor; they lived in an out-of-the-way part of the island; above all, there were not very many men with whom she could have affairs, and Josephine had sisters who would naturally be obstacles in such matters.

Over the Tascher family there lay a brooding influence. It had already manifested itself in a number of ways—the Tascher pension was directly due to it. Now it was to reappear and become a primary factor in the moulding of Josephine's career. Her aunt, the mistress of the Marquis de Beauharnais, had returned to France with the ex-governor. She had already lived with him for seventeen years; his children regarded her with more than filial respect; his wife and her husband had both long ceased from troubling; but still she wished to bind him more closely to her. The consequence was that she prevailed on him to write to M. Tascher de la Pagerie in

Martinique requesting the hand of one of his three daughters for his son Alexandre, then just seventeen years of age.

Beauharnais apologized for not asking for Josephine, but she was too old, he said. The second daughter (aged at this time not more than thirteen) would be more suitable. He went on to say that he did not expect any *dot*, that his son would have an annual income of forty thousand livres, and that he (the son) was anxiously awaiting the arrival of his bride (whom, by the way, he had never seen).

It is easy to imagine the joy this letter would cause in poverty-stricken Trois Islets. Alliance (and not a left-handed one this time) with the family of a Marquis of considerable wealth and more considerable influence, with no dowry to be found, and nothing to be done in return, seemed almost too good to be true, like a money-lender's circular offering unlimited loans without security or unpleasant inquiries. And it was too good to be true, too. Catherine-Désirée Tascher de la Pagerie had died before her father received this request for her hand. Nothing daunted, M. Tascher wrote back, offering instead his third daughter, Manette, who had attained the mature age of eleven and a half years, although he hinted at the same time that he thought it would be a kindly action on the Marquis's part to take his elder daughter, Yeyette (alias Josephine). The Marquis, apparently quite indifferent so long as Mme. Renaudin (who was proving a regular Old Woman of the Sea to him) was satisfied, eventually agreed to take for his son any daughter of M. Tascher's which that gentleman could best spare. Great was the joy at Trois Islets. Poor

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Manette was subjected to the full rigours of parental pressure until she agreed to give up the splendid match which had for a few heavenly days appeared likely for her. M. Tascher proceeded with difficulty to raise the necessary funds to pay passages, and after an anxious wait for convoy in consequence of the fresh war which had broken out with England he and Josephine arrived in France in the autumn of 1779. Manette remained husbandless in Martinique, to die there only a few years later. And it might so easily have been Josephine's fate instead!

But now Josephine was in France, and very much nearer the Tuileries, in more senses than one.

CHAPTER II

THE SAINT'S PROGRESS

A SINGLE chapter seems a very small amount to devote to sixteen years of the life of an Empress, but in this case one cannot well devote more. If only people had known that the small child with bad teeth dressed in tropical white who lived at Trois Islets had such a future before her, we might have been more intimately informed about her. If anyone who had known Josephine in that misty past had achieved sufficient distinction later for his memoirs to have had a market value we might know more. If Martinique had been as near to Paris as Kensington is to London we might know more. If Josephine had reigned sixty-three years and had identified herself with the whole mental outlook of the mass of her people we would at least think we knew more. For there would have been a demand, and in history, more even than in commerce, demand is apt to create supply. But nothing like that occurred. The most absolute ruler of modern times decided that he did not want any reference made to his wife's early life; the traducers found ample material at hand later in her subsequent career; the panegyrists likewise found ample material in the same period, while they found in the few

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references already noticed warning not to pry too deeply ; after the manner of panegyrists all the world over they promptly turned their backs on fact and proceeded to draw on their imaginations, telling of her life as mistress of "hundreds of slaves" and "vast estates," and thereby making statements which are obviously untrue while leaving until it was too late any attempt to get at the truth of the matter.

And so everything is vague and shadowy—hints of poverty, hints of evil surroundings, hints of lack of faith in the future, hints of a hopeless education, (though one really no worse than most young women received a hundred and fifty years ago), hints everywhere which can only be half corroborated at most. The effect produced is, therefore, shadowy and misty, but even the most gallant historian can hardly help feeling a sneaking suspicion that Josephine's early life was murky as well as shadowy.

But be that as it may, Josephine has now a husband, and an apparently rich one, and an apparently clever one, apparently a Vicomte, and apparently devoted. Surely he will save her from calumny ! But with regret we discover that M. le Vicomte de Beauharnais is not really rich, not a bit clever, a viscount only on the strength of a rather risky assumption, not at all devoted, and actually the earliest of all Josephine's many calumniators. The Tuileries suddenly seem much farther off.

When young Beauharnais makes his bow on the stage the first point one notices about him is his devotion to his father's mistress, whose counsel he follows in all his acts. Surely there is nothing stranger recorded than this young man's deference

to a left-handed stepmother of no recordable antecedents. In his opinion her epistolary style is as good as Mme. de Sevigny's, while her judgment and good sense are incomparable. At her suggestion he takes a wife without dowry or apparent talent—a wife, too, allied to his family by the dubious relationship of unofficial step-cousinhood. But so self-contradictory a character is he that he talks complacently about educating this young wife of his up to a standard worthy of him. The fact that this young gentleman is himself only eighteen years of age adds piquancy to this suggestion. Poor Josephine was soon to find that she had been given in marriage to a pompous young blackguard with much too good an opinion of himself and much too poor an opinion of others.

The marriage took place a month after the first meeting of the happy pair, at the parish church of Noisy-le-Grand, and after it the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Beauharnais came to Paris to settle down in the Rue Thevenot, where Josephine, we may presume, at last found time to look about her and to form a truer estimate of the blessings of the high estate to which it had pleased God to call her. Paris in 1779 was hardly the ideal place for a honeymoon for two young members of the lower nobility. The chronic war with England was dragging its slow length along; the government was travelling along the facile descent to national bankruptcy; Marie Antoinette and all the proud Rohans and de la Rochefoucaulds who shared the simple and expensive delights of the Petit Trianon would, of course, not turn an inch out of their path to smooth that of the

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little Creole wife of the younger son of a first Marquis; the wealthy middle class, with their eyes fixed on much higher rungs of the social ladder would not bother about her either; the poor were starving in the streets (while the Queen asked why they did not eat brioche if they could not get bread); Josephine did not go to Court; as far as can be ascertained she did not meet anyone of any social position except a few dry-as-dust relations-in-law. And so, without any gilding of the pill, Josephine had to endure the educating process which her husband planned for her. In the most cold-blooded way this young gentleman proceeded to analyse his sixteen-year-old wife's letters (shy, pitiful little things we may be sure they were), pointing out her mistakes and the infelicities of her style, and even hinting, when he received a better one, that the worthy and virtuous Mme. Renaudin must have helped her. And yet at the same time he protests to her, while he is away on garrison duty with his regiment, that he is always faithful to her. He protests too much. Most of the genuine and recognized villains of history can generally raise some furtive sympathy in the reader's breast, but the sole sensation one feels when reading Beauharnais' letters is an overwhelming desire to kick him, conscientiously and scientifically. He is the supreme example of Rousseau-gone-wrong among the many that present themselves during this period. Josephine must have felt enormously relieved when he at last gave up the struggle and went away on a continental tour. The couple were already semi-permanently separated when Josephine's first child was expected.

Perhaps it was largely Josephine's fault. She

was probably a little jealous, a little gauche, a little shy; almost for certain she was not half as desirable as Mme. Renaudin must have painted her to Alexandre before he met her; but this is no excuse for Beauharnais, for had he had even an average amount of common decency he would have borne with her shortcomings with sufficient patience for her to overcome them. She proved later that she was quite able to do this.

But Josephine's fault or Beauharnais', Alexandre was content to visit his wife ungraciously after the birth of his eldest son for the purpose of the christening, but after that he fled precipitately to Italy, leaving the further education of Josephine to the tender mercies of Mme. Renaudin. Eugène-Rose de Beauharnais was born on September 3rd, 1781, he was destined to become Prince of Venice, Duke of Eichstadt, Viceroy of Italy, and Grand Eagle of the Legion of Honour. He was also destined to prove almost the only holder of high office during the fifty years that followed, on the continent who was true to every pledge, whose honour remained unsullied during the whole of a long life, who resisted the most dazzling offers made to seduce him from the allegiance which others gloried in deserting; but it seems likely that the relations gathered round the new-born child, and almost certainly his mother as well, would have been prouder of the knowledge, had they possessed it, that he was fated to marry the daughter of the King of Bavaria and to become father-in-law of the King of Sweden.

No sooner was Eugène born than off went Alexandre on his travels again to Italy, but this time

absence may have made the heart grow fonder, or perhaps Mme. Renaudin's counsels may have wrought of Josephine's plastic material something more suited to his imperious taste, or perhaps he may merely have changed his mind once more, but on his return he was certainly kinder to Josephine than for years previously. Upon this kindness depended the fate of Empires. Literally, for from this reconciliation was born Josephine's second (and last) child, Hortense. Hortense married Napoleon's brother, Louis, and by him became the mother of Louis Napoleon, later Napoleon III. It only took a little forgiveness on Josephine's part to found the Second Empire, and, perhaps, incidentally, the Kingdom of Italy, the German Empire, and even (to wear the speculation to rags) to cause later the Great War and the deaths of several million men and of an unestimated number of women and children.

The reconciliation was not very long drawn out. Three months after his return from Italy Beauharnais volunteered for service in the West Indies, where, as usual, there was fighting between the French and the English, and set sail with the army of relief for Martinique. Just before he left Brest he heard from Josephine that she was expecting another child, and he replied with satisfaction. His sense of duty, however, was too strong for him to try to delay his departure until Josephine's trouble was over. Had chance decided that Beauharnais should be involved in severe fighting and receive a bayonet in the stomach, or should die of yellow fever like so many of his betters, he would perhaps have had what he deserved, but it was not to be. Instead, the treaty

of Versailles brought peace to the distressful islands as soon as he arrived there, and Beauharnais found himself merely on garrison duty in his wife's native island. And Satan promptly found mischief for his idle hands.

Beauharnais was already rather annoyed with his wife's family because they had treated him coldly on his arrival (which was not really surprising, seeing that M. Tascher had remained long enough in France after his daughter's wedding to see how Beauharnais treated her), and now he became intimate with another lady of the island who told him various tales about the Taschers and, more particularly, about Josephine, until apparently his head was turned with rage. There is really no other explanation for his conduct. A man who believes what his mistress tells him about his wife must certainly have something seriously the matter with him. This nameless lady told Beauharnais some wild stories about Josephine's flirtation with various men during her young days in Martinique, and Beauharnais swallowed them whole—stories of secret meetings, of suborned slaves, of assignations granted while her parents slept, of presents given and of letters written, until he was mad with rage. He waited three weeks after hearing these tales, and then he wrote to his wife at enormous length. The letter was harsh and cruel to the last degree. The only reference he made to the news he had just received of the birth of his daughter was to deny the parentage; in addition, after heaping execration on his wife's head on account of accusations received from a person whom he did not name (for very obvious reasons) he ordered her to leave his

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house immediately upon receipt of his letter and betake herself to a convent. He told her that this would be the last letter she would ever receive from him, and that he only intended to see her once more in this world, and then only to make the final arrangements for the separation. He ended his letter, after a wail of self-pity, with a stern repetition of his order that she should leave his house at once.

It is difficult to visualize the effect upon Josephine of reading this letter. But however she received the first shock of it (and unfortunately we have no information on the point) she must soon have found that she had nothing to fear. To begin with, she had an ally who alone was worth a hundred Beauharnais. This was Mme. Renaudin. The worthy lady's position was equivocal enough without the added strain of having her niece divorced by her paramour's son, particularly since she was the principal instigator of the marriage in the first place. Naturally she flung herself tooth and nail into the conflict, and she succeeded in carrying the rest of the family with her. The wretched Beauharnais arrived in France to find his father and his uncles arrayed in battle order against him as well as his wife and the lady whose good opinion he valued so highly. Josephine and Mme. Renaudin lodged in the abbey of Panthemont while the negotiations were being carried through (one cannot discover any contemporary views on the residence of a lady with Mme. Renaudin's views on marriage in such a place) and while Beauharnais went blundering forward on his attack they there organized a counter-attack of extraordinary effective-

ness. Rossbach, Austerlitz, Salamanca, Josephine's manoeuvre might well have served as model for them all. Beauharnais was utterly routed, caught, just as Kutusoff and Marmont were, in the midst of an ill-advised offensive movement.

Clearly he had not a leg to stand on. Premarital infidelities (if such a contradiction in terms can be tolerated) are not sufficient excuse for setting a marriage aside even if they can be proved, and Beauharnais was in no position to make good his allegations. As already stated, they were probably false, anyway (Beauharnais' ready acceptance of them is, if anything, rather an argument against their truth) while Josephine had a number of genuine grievances which she could prove to the hilt. Beauharnais had been unfaithful to her more than once, and his treatment of her had been scandalously cruel. He was now forced to enter into a deed of separation, by which he agreed to Josephine's living apart from him, to allow her five thousand livres per annum, and to give her the guardianship of little Hortense. The only item in his favour in the whole agreement was a stipulation giving him the custody of his son Eugène from the age of five. What with the freedom of grasswidowhood and five thousand livres a year Josephine was now in a more comfortable situation than if she had been at the Tuileries.

But now we reach a period in Josephine's life which is more hazy and undocumented even than her early life. We know that she spent more than a year at the abbey of Panthemont, and that next she settled down at Fontainebleau with her father-in-law—and, of course, her worthy aunt—and proceeded to

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lead a fairly fashionable provincial life. But her worries began again almost at once. All through Josephine's life men and money were causing her trouble. Nothing remarkable about that, perhaps, seeing that something more than ninety per cent. of all women's troubles arise from one or other of these causes, but Josephine's troubles were chronic instead of being spasmodic.

At Fontainebleau poverty descended upon her. Her father-in-law's pension was unexpectedly reduced. This was bad fortune for him, though, seeing that he had done nothing to earn it one cannot feel very sorry for him. Next, there was trouble in the West Indies, and his income (and Alexandre's likewise) was greatly reduced. Since it appears that he had committed the management of his property to Josephine's father one can only say that this was bound to happen sooner or later. The last straw was the death of Mme. Renaudin's nominal husband. Although this gentleman occupies as inconspicuous a part in history as a number of other husbands—Mr. Beeton, for instance—he nevertheless did his share by contributing indirectly to the upkeep of the future Empress in the funds which he supplied to his wife. Mme. Renaudin unselfishly shared them with the Marquis, and the two of them displayed their gratitude for Renaudin's incredible generosity by refraining from marrying until eleven years later, after living together for nearly thirty.

The consequence of these accumulated misfortunes was that Josephine found herself pressed for money, and several letters of hers have been preserved in which she implores her father in Martinique to hurry up

with his remittances. Next we find her going out to Martinique herself. The reason for this trip is hard to find. For a long time no one troubled to seek for a motive, for the biographers naturally assumed that it was not very strange for a lady recently separated from her husband to go for a long trip to see the parents from whom she had been parted for so long. With Josephine, moreover, it is frequently hopeless looking for a motive. If any stronger call to Martinique is needed beside family affection, there is the necessity of raising money, and of overseeing M. Tascher's efforts. Consequently, Josephine's two years in Martinique would have gone almost unnoticed if by some chance a document of some authenticity had not been unearthed, purporting to be the birth certificate of a daughter to one of the Tascher girls, the only ones surviving at this time being Josephine and her unmarried sister, Marie-Françoise. But the mother was registered as Marie-Joseph-Rose—Josephine's names. The document is dated 1786, i.e., before Josephine left France, so that if the certificate is accepted as genuine the date clears Josephine; it is absurd to accept the document as genuine and the date on it as spurious. Besides, a Marie-Joseph-Rose Tascher is certified as having died in 1791, and this is clearly Josephine's sole surviving sister. If Marie-Françoise was buried under her sister's names it is exceedingly probable that she registered her illegitimate motherhood under them. The main difficulty is that very much later, in fact in 1807, Josephine took an interest in a certain young girl who took her name of Tascher de la Pagerie, and Napoleon describes her as a girl of eighteen years,

which would point to her being born in 1789, when Josephine was in Martinique. But it is much more likely that Napoleon should make a mistake in estimating a girl's age than that a registrar should put down a wrong date on a certificate. If further proof of Josephine's innocence is required, one has only to consider the fact that this controversy did not begin to arise until comparatively recently, while people with all the malice in the world, and with great personal temptation to defame Josephine, did not drag in this argument.

To crown it all, if Josephine was going to have an illegitimate child, why did she go to Martinique for the birth? She had already had one unpleasant example of the way in which Martinique gossip reached the ears of her husband. Seeing that she was so poor that the amount of her passage money was a serious consideration she might just as well have gone to some retired country village in France. At La Bourboule, for instance, or any other of a hundred places, Josephine could have had her child in peace without having to travel a thousand miles for the purpose. It was not that Josephine was incapable of having an illegitimate child; all that is maintained here is that she did not have one in 1789.

About the details of Josephine's stay in Martinique we are quite ignorant. We do not even know why she left at a particular date. But one thing we do know. The French Revolution was by now beginning to accelerate its pace. For years it had been inevitable and the safety valve had been kept shut down too long for any human agency to moderate its violence. But just at present it had no

become very violent. So far matters had progressed in a quite gentlemanly manner. The deeds and misdeeds of Louis le Bien-Aimé, and of Voltaire and Rousseau and half a hundred others, were now gradually beginning to bear fruit. An important factor in all the negotiations and theorizing that were taking place was the opposition of a considerable proportion of the lower nobility to the great ones of their caste. Some were actuated by motives of pure opportunism; some were honestly and thoughtfully in favour of reform; some merely wished to revenge past slights; and some were suffering from over-doses of fashionable literature, so that they could not open their mouths without letting fall some over-worked allusion to Brutus or Cincinnatus or the Gracchi. And since they opened their mouths on every possible occasion these references to antiquity were appallingly frequent. But they went down well with the mob for twenty years. Even Napoleon was guilty of using them occasionally; even a small-brained person like Murat could employ them with effect.

But at the moment it is of more consequence to discuss not fads in catch phrases, but the defection of the lower nobility. The latter was, it is true, only following the example of the Orleans faction, led by the horrible Philippe Egalité, but the result of their defection was very pronounced. Leaders are what a new party most needs, and what better leaders could be desired than blue-blooded nobles with an ample supply of intoxicating allusions to Scaevola and Regulus and Cato? Until the Third Estate learned to guide its own fortunes it was entirely dependent

upon renegades for men accustomed to leadership and able to speak in public and with some sort of experience in the management of men and political women. One of the brightest particular stars of the infant Third Estate was Alexandre, Vicomte de Beauharnais. He had thrown in his lot with them at once, as soon as he had made up his mind to enter politics at all, and he had got himself elected to the Constituent Assembly as deputy for Blois. He found himself at once in an atmosphere most congenial to him. He was wordy and pompous, saturated in Rousseau, without much brains, unhampered by principle, of good appearance, and possessing a combination of obstinacy and timidity that boded well for his future success in the world of politics. It was only natural that he should step at once into the front rank of his party.

He was one of those who took the Oath of the Tennis Court, and soon after he was elected President of the Constituent Assembly. The King's flight to Varennes and recapture brought him an immediate increase of power, and for the moment he had the dictatorship of France in his grasp. It was a position rather like Kerensky's after the commencement of the Russian Revolution. Beauharnais was hailed everywhere as the man of the moment. Envious people called him "The Dauphin" behind his back; forgotten friends appeared in dozens to beg for favours; he was courted on all sides—and his wife came back from Martinique.

Just how much of coincidence there was in this return it is impossible to decide. Curiously enough, it is Josephine's apologists that make her out to be

mercenary in this case. They state that there was a complete reconciliation between husband and wife, that they settled down amicably together, and the writers go on to say that this was due to Josephine's appreciation of Beauharnais' exploits in the world of debate. This seems quite untrue. As far as can be ascertained, the couple still maintained separate establishments—Josephine in the Rue de l'Université, and Beauharnais in the Rue des Petits Augustins. Besides, Beauharnais was by now a poor man, for much of his property was in San Domingo, and in the hands of insurgents. Consequently money, the possession of which was perhaps the quickest way to Josephine's heart, was woefully short, and there is no evidence that Beauharnais made any compensation for this in the way of introducing Josephine into society. Nevertheless, they met frequently, for Beauharnais wanted to discuss his children's education with his wife, while their unstable financial position must have called for frequent consultations. Great position made no appreciable difference to Beauharnais' character. He remained the wordy self-satisfied humbug he had always been, writing about his promotions as the reward of disinterested patriotism or staunch republicanism as the mood took him, and boasting of his *sans-culotterie* to all and sundry.

But already fate was closing up to him. He had lost his grasp on circumstances as they took their inevitable and irresistible trend towards the last extreme of revolution. He had not the foresight to perceive this trend; he had not the strength to combat it; he had not the dexterity to profit by it. In

an evil hour he sought to make for himself a fresh position by military success. He joined the staff of the Army of the North, and gained rapid promotion, partly in consequence of the influence he was able to bring to bear, and partly because of the dearth of trained officers following the wholesale emigration of the noble classes. Soon he was offered the Ministry of War in Paris, and he refused. He flinched from returning to the welter of conflicting passions which was the government, and it was obvious to the meanest intelligence that soon active service would not be half as dangerous as holding political power. As it happened, time was to prove that, thanks to the politicians, command-in-chief was to be more dangerous still. The government were to find that a public thirst for blood was more conveniently slaked by the lopping off of a few generals' heads than by admitting their own guilt, and besides, did not their own beloved Voltaire have something to say about *encourager les autres*? So Beauharnais refused the Ministry of War—and left it to be filled by Carnot, who was not merely to organize victory, but was to make possible, by his reforms, the subsequent victories of a certain Napoleon Bonaparte. Instead, Beauharnais accepted the command of the Army of the Rhine. What qualifications he thought he had for the command of two hundred thousand men, whom he would have to feed and clothe if anyone did and who were hardly more of an army than the force which the Yeomanry rode down twenty-four years later in St. Peter's fields, is not quite clear, and in addition Beauharnais proceeded to cut the ground from under his own feet by his extraordinary actions.

He found he could not induce the hopeless mob he commanded to move by any manner of means. Mayence fell; his men fled panic-stricken at the least move of the enemy; whether they ran or whether they stood they starved and died of disease; the deputies on mission at his headquarters nagged at him until he was nearly frantic; while literally to save his life he could not think of any plan to remedy this state of affairs. . He fell back on the one expedient he could devise. He said he was ill, and fled back to the base at Strasbourg like the meanest malingerer in his army. .

Not content with this, he made no attempt at acting the part, but he let his old weakness get the better of him and indulged in a flirtation with an officer's daughter there. Not unnaturally he was deprived of his command and sent into retirement to Ferté-Beauharnais. Inevitably his arrest followed, despite the frantic way in which he spent the interval in preaching about the orthodoxy of his views, and six weeks later Josephine was arrested also.

Josephine had spent the period of her husband's greatness in the usual manner, the summers in the country and the winters in Paris. The panegyrists say that at this time she was a leader in society and that her salon was frequented by all that Paris had to show in the way of talent and splendour. The detractors say that she lived a very erratic life—indeed, she is accused by one or other of living with every man of note in the town. Neither school of opinion has anything to go on besides their own prejudices, and the probability is that they both are wrong—that Josephine led a quiet life both in town

and country, flirting as little as she could manage, and doing some real good by intervening on behalf of those in trouble as often as she could. With Beauharnais' fall she realized both his danger and her own, and she did her best for her husband by petitioning all the influential people she knew. But it was vain. Beauharnais remained in prison, and she herself was sent to Les Carmes as well.

CHAPTER III

PRISON AND AFTER

SO far Josephine has occupied what might almost be considered a minor part in a book nominally devoted to her, but this ungallant inattention is excusable, to say the least. Indeed, it is a highly significant fact. One could hardly expect a young girl from Martinique to step straight into history, especially when she is encumbered by a husband like the one chance gave her and by parents as hopeless as the Taschers. But this period of necessary quiet probably was all for the best, for while it lasted Josephine was learning some very useful lessons in deportment and in the ways of the world; it is quite an object-lesson to read first Beauharnais' letters on the shortcomings of his wife, and then read later comments on Josephine's exquisite tact and delicacy of feeling. Josephine learned her lesson in a hard school, but she learned it thoroughly.

But for the moment it seemed as if she had learned it in vain. The guillotine seemed very near as Josephine sat despairing in the Chamber of the Swords in Les Carmes. Months before, during the September massacres, some of the assassins had pressed their dripping weapons against the wall, leaving the outlines of three sword-blades thereon in horrible brown stains; it was in this cell that Jose-

phine passed more than a hundred days, each more likely to be her last than the one before. A single garment was all she was permitted to wear; her food was abominable and her bedding worse; cold, dirt, hunger, and disease all bore hard upon her. She was not entirely cut off from her husband. They were allowed to communicate by letter—although how Beauharnais' letters must have read in the depressing atmosphere of a prison is better to imagine than experience. Occasionally Josephine heard from her two children, who were living on charity outside the prison, and as some slight additional compensation for her privations she had the privilege of sharing her cell with a real Duchess. The slanderers cannot cease their malicious hints against Josephine even during this period. They go so far as to accuse her of a liaison with General Lazare Hoche, the conqueror of La Vendée and future commander of the Army of the Rhine. It is an extraordinary accusation to make, for a prison where there is more than one person in every cell is surely the last place where such an affair could be carried through. Add to this the facts that Hoche's period of confinement only lasted a month, that he did not know Josephine before he entered the prison, and that he was very much in love with his wife, whom he had only married a month or two before, and it is at once realized that in this case, as in so many others, Josephine has been clumsily libelled.

Time went on, and the fear of death pressed harder and harder on the wretched woman. Once she broke down under the strain and wept unashamedly. The Committee of Public Safety were

much exercised about the overcrowding in Les Carmes, and proceeded to go the most economical way towards emptying it. They accused fifty of the inmates of conspiring to escape. This, of course, was resistance to the will of the Republic, One and Indivisible, and was in consequence the blackest treason. Even if the charge was incorrect it was treasonable to be in such a situation that it *might* be true, so it is not surprising to hear that forty-seven of the fifty "conspirators" were condemned to death. Among them was Alexandre de Beauharnais.

His death showed that he was consistent, if nothing else. The night before he died he spent in writing a long letter to his wife, who had just been warned that she, too, would have to appear before the Tribunal in five days' time. The letter is absolutely typical of the man and of the period. It begins by denouncing his accusers as a lot of aristocrats—it was fashionable just then to call anyone one did not like an aristocrat, in the same way that, according to Mr. Bernard Shaw, Englishmen call "traitors" men whose international politics are opposed to English interests. It goes on to say that Josephine can have no doubt as to the feelings with which he will take leave of her and of the world. Since there is no word of love in the whole epistle, and since he merely calls her "my friend" and speaks of his "brotherly affection" for her, Beauharnais' meaning is, to say the least, doubtful.

Then it goes on to say that he is very sorry that he can no longer serve France, and he is much concerned that as he is dying she will think him a traitor. But he will find consolation in the fact that his con-

science is pure, and he implores his wife to devote the rest of her life to rehabilitating him in the eyes of his country. The letter ends by recommending Josephine to find consolation in the education of their children.

The one possible explanation of this letter is that Beauharnais wrote it with one eye on the Press—its measured periods and stilted eloquence point very definitely to that end. Seeing that he was writing to a woman who was marked to die in a very brief space of time it is some consolation to the reader that Beauharnais' wish was not gratified; the letter did *not* appear in the Press. Beauharnais died on July 23rd, 1794.

Meanwhile, strange things were happening in the Government. Marat had gone, Danton had gone, all the really prominent men who could oppose Robespierre had vanished from the stage one after the other. He seemed the unquestioned dictator of France. But in cutting the ground from under their feet Robespierre had weakened his own foothold beyond the danger-point. There were murmurs even among his own followers, and crafty, shifty men like Barras and Tallien were realizing that the only way to security for themselves lay past the removal of the "Sea-green Incorruptible." Robespierre's mummery of the celebration of the feast of the Supreme Being seriously damaged Robespierre's position. The moderates (such as remained) and the reactionaries found themselves reinforced at a welcome moment by the greater part of Robespierre's followers. The renegades turned the scale, and Robespierre and St. Just and Couthon died on the

Place de la Revolution. The reign of terror had come to an end. A large number of people had died by the guillotine—nearly as many as were shot after farcical trials following the Commune of 1871, but so far the Communards have never attained power long enough to canonize their martyrs. For martyrs they were, even if misguided ones. But those who died in 1793-94 were fortunate enough to have the sympathy of the vocal part of the world, and in consequence their sufferings and devotion will never be forgotten. Perhaps if they could have foreseen this, if they could have foreseen that a thousand pens (not the least among them being Baroness Orczy's) would record their miseries, it might have reconciled them to sudden death. It might not, too. And to succeed them there was nobody, while the unsung Communards, although a whole generation of them was wiped out without ceremony, have recovered all and more of their former position.

But it is a far cry from the Commune to Josephine, who has been left without a shadow of apology on the imminent verge of death. The psychology of the condemned cell has a fascination of its own—novelists and criminologists, humanitarians and psycho-analysts have all taken a turn at the study. But they have never obtained any data from Josephine. Never subsequently did she make any recorded observations as to her emotions during those terrible weeks. Most probably she did her best to forget them as soon as they were ended; perhaps she was a little ashamed of the occasion on which she broke down under the strain and wept publicly; perhaps she was so dazed by the horrible possibility

that the present reality made no remembered impression on her. All these are possible, but—on reading Josephine's letters, on reading the authentic first-hand accounts of the biographers, one is conscious of a faint but irrepressible suspicion that Josephine did not suffer as much as some other people might have done. It was not so much that she did not care (for obviously she did) as that her eternal optimism and blank disbelief in the unpleasant brought her through the ordeal nearly unscathed. Josephine did not want to be guillotined; therefore, said her mind on most occasions, she would not be guillotined. The times when her faith wavered were doubtless terrible, but they were fortunately few. And now Robespierre lies in a bloody grave, and the gaols are emptying steadily—and not by tumbril to the Place de la Revolution, either. Josephine is free to go where she will, to live as she pleases, to do what she likes—so long as she can pay for it. She has not a penny to call her own, but that is not the business of the newly-formed Directory. They have released her from prison, and their responsibility is over.

So Josephine came out of Les Carmes. It might well seem as if there was no new experience left for her. She had known the pinch of poverty; for a space she had known the flush of prosperity. She had known the generous love of girlhood, and the bitter disillusionment that follows. She had suffered the pain of child-bearing, and she had seen her children's father turn from her with loathing. She had been the wife of the greatest man in the country, of a general commanding the largest army of France—and of a condemned convict. She had known the

reflected glory of a husband's power, and she knew what it was like to be in peril of her life for three months at a time. Into the twenty-eight years of her life were crowded the experience of a lifetime. All she could possibly crave at this time must have only been peace and comfort, but instead she found herself less advantageously situated even than at Martinique when a child. She had no money whatever, for her husband's estates in San Domingo were in the hands of insurgent negroes, and those of her late father were held by the English. She was utterly incapable of earning her own living, and the Paris labour market must have been crowded with hundreds like her, while at the same time she was handicapped by having to support two young children. *Tout savoir, c'est tout pardonner.*

But the traducers care for none of these things. With exultation they clutch their pens, for now they have reached that period in Josephine's life to which they have been looking eagerly forward from the beginning. Anything can be said about Josephine regarding the years 1794-95. She is fair game, for it has become an accepted procedure to blacken her during this period. Some of the remarks made almost tempt one to believe that the whole book was written only to provide an excuse for making them. In an historical work one can write things which would lead to a criminal prosecution if they appeared in a novel. So that anyone with a taste for the pornographic; anyone who has an iron in the fire and is seeking out any weapon to attack Napoleon I or Napoleon III; any memoirist who is in need of padding, turns at once to this period.

The apologists give up the struggle at this point with hardly a blow struck. They slur over anything they can in a manner which calls to mind the proverb "Qui s'excuse s'accuse"; but generally they apparently consider it too hopeless an effort even to slur over, and, throwing themselves upon the mercy of the court confess to more, possibly, than Josephine was actually guilty of.

So far no historian has arisen with the strength of character or the bias of mind to claim for his heroine a capacity for mercenary love as one of her qualifications for greatness; but it seems a perfectly logical thing to do. A woman might well claim that not to use her beauty to the utmost would be as foolish as it would be for a general voluntarily to deprive himself of artillery. Likewise if an officer is worthy of praise on account of his ability to sacrifice lives without losing his nerve, a woman might equally claim admiration because she is able to endure with equanimity a succession of falls from virtue. But casuistry apart, it is impossible not to realize that situated as was Josephine, not one woman in ten could come through such an ordeal unsmirched.

For Paris was heaving a vast sigh of relief now that the Terror had passed. Heads were more securely on shoulders than they had been for years. The new chiefs of the State were tasting for the first time the sweets of power. The wars had already lasted long enough to rear up a new aristocracy of wealth, and the still present hint of instability in the atmosphere was sufficient to stimulate everyone to a wild gaiety to make the most of the time allowed them. There was a madness of the most infectious

kind epidemic in Paris. After speech had been so long necessary to conceal one's thoughts if one wished to survive, clothes were now being worn by contrast to reveal one's body. The early Directoire styles, beautiful in themselves, were best set off by wearing nothing underneath and making certain that such a state of affairs was obvious. When everyone was making allusions to classical history, and Tarquin was more frequently spoken of than Louis XVI what was more natural than that women should also take heed of the classics, and aspire to act Josephine-Aspasia to the Director's Barras-Pericles? It sounds much more attractive to be a hetaira than a loose woman. Josephine's bread, and her children's bread beside, depended upon her being a successful hetaira. Her success ought to be her justification.

The fact remains that Josephine succeeded in raising enough money during this period by other means than the obvious ones nearly to give substantial support to the theory that she did not employ those means at all. She borrowed money from a Hamburg banker, on the security of drafts on her mother in Martinique—a fact which argues for her an amount of financial ability worthy of a modern company promoter. Mme. Tallien, who now makes her appearance on this stage, introduced her to a number of wealthy people from whom she contrived to borrow fairly large sums. She managed to economize by another practice as old as civilization—spoken of by Petronius and Ovid, and not unknown in society at the present day—she dined out every evening of her life at the expense of friends. But the money went as fast as it came. Josephine, the impecunious

widow, kept a carriage; flowers and scent and trifles of jewellery, clothes and furnishing accessories; all those things, in fact, that she loved best, cost her enough to have kept her in solid middle-class comfort. That they did do so is one of the most typical points in Josephine's character; if anyone wishes to blame her for it, let him do it who is without sin in this respect.

At the head of affairs at this time in France was the Director Barras. He had risen from nothing to this position of which he was not really unworthy. He had fought for the King in India and for the Convention at Toulon. He had gambled with his life by heading the coalition against Robespierre. He would flinch from nothing; he had the eye of a connoisseur for a man or a woman; to him both Bonaparte and Carnot owed some of their promotion. He could fight like a wolf if he were cornered; he could grasp an opportunity if one came his way; he could destroy; he could even destroy selectively. What he could not do was to construct, and it was still not quite time for a constructive statesman. He was also one of the worst scoundrels of that time, which is saying a good deal.

Both by virtue of his office and on account of a genuine desire on his part to cut a figure in society Barras became the leading figure in the social life of the capital, and almost necessarily Josephine came into contact with him. Gossip at once credited her with becoming his mistress—no mean achievement, seeing that scores of women were competing in the same market—and in his memoirs Barras admits that gossip for once in a way spoke truth.

But there are grounds for wondering whether Barras was speaking truth. Apart from the fact, already stated, that no man deserves to be believed when he says such a thing about a lady whom he names, it is obvious that Barras was animated by the utmost hatred for Josephine and for Napoleon. It is also obvious that when writing his memoirs he endeavoured, as did Pooh-Bah, to add artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. He dragged in the old lie about Josephine and Hoche, adding confirmatory and abominable details to the effect that the affair came to an end in consequence of Josephine's passion for a groom. He goes too far there, for no one with even the slightest knowledge of Josephine's character could ever believe that she would waste her sweetness on anyone without money if she were in need, as she was. In fact, Barras said as much later in his memoirs.

But it is impossible not to think, after weighing the evidence, that for some time Josephine was Barras's mistress. Everyone in Paris thought so; she was able to keep up a country house at Croissy as well as to rent and furnish a town house in the Rue Chantierine. Her daughter Hortense went to Mme. Campan's, the fashionable ladies' academy, her son Eugène went to the Collège Irlandais. Barras's country house was close to Josephine's, and he was a frequent visitor. Josephine was continually at the Luxemburg after the Directors had set up house there.

Josephine must have raised money from someone. It is possible that she obtained it without making any return, but it is not likely. Hence she must have

been somebody's mistress, and she could not have been anyone's but Barras's, because anyone else, intent on getting his money's worth, would never have allowed her to see so much of him. Besides, Barras was a personable fellow with wealth and position in his gift. Had Josephine been given her choice, she would have picked Barras for certain, while since she was at the height of her charms Barras would be just as likely to pick her. By capturing the man who might well be called the Managing Director of the French Republic, Josephine was certainly making the best of a bad business. Too much had happened to Josephine lately for her to mind much what else happened so long as her life and her livelihood were safe.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISING OF THE SUN

DISILLUSIONMENT is hard to define. In a way, disappointment comes nearest to it, but those who to the unseeing eye seem never to have been disappointed are the most likely to have been disillusioned. The disappointment of success, the satiety of events, weariness of everything, Josephine knew all these. Power and poverty, notoriety and insignificance, comfort and danger, there was no longer any lesson for her in any of these things. Consequently, when she was active, she longed for repose; when she was forced into inaction she longed for something to happen. Yet so many things had happened to her that anything fresh could hardly be new. Nothing more difficult can be imagined than the problem of how to rouse her enthusiasm—unless it be how to maintain that enthusiasm after rousing it.

It may therefore be taken for granted that the revolt of the Sections, which took place after she had been dragging on her limbo-like existence with Barras for a year or more, did not affect Josephine's mental poise to any great extent. She probably did not know very much about it. Barras was probably in the wrong, but the other side was probably equally

so. Very possibly neither side knew what they really wanted. If Barras was beaten, and met the fate proper to defeated politicians, something else would most likely turn up; if it did not, then so much the better, for Josephine was tired to death of everything. So Josephine did not become deeply interested when Barras, with his neck at stake, began to hunt round desperately for some not too scrupulous or politically-minded officer to lead the regular garrison of Paris against her indignant National Guard. Nor was she deeply interested when Barras found him—a lean-featured, haggard artillery brigadier of not much reputation; only recently restored to the rank of which he had been deprived; pale with much privation in his youth; in an out-at-elbows uniform with lank hair hanging in rat's tails about his face. He was very young and very gauche, and his gaucherie contrasted curiously with his assurance on matters military. Perhaps Josephine noticed his eyes—blue-grey they were, with a gleam like steel on a clear winter's morning, and with rare and curious lights in them on occasions. He walked as if he owned the earth, and if Josephine had been by some miracle acquainted with a later English idiom she might have said that he was too big for his boots at the same time that his boots were too big for him. To crown it all, he bore the ridiculous Italian name of Bonaparte. Seeing that divisional generals were as common as flies about the Paris headquarters, and commanders-in-chief were frequent visitors, it is small wonder that Josephine paid scant attention to this newcomer.

Yet even this fantastic creature managed somehow

to obtain devotion from various satellites whom he had acquired at odd times in his career. There was Junot with his swarthy, handsome face, with no hint of the madness which was to cause his suicide fifteen years later. There was Marmont, a rosy-cheeked artillery subaltern, destined to lose for his various masters a Kingdom of Spain, an Empire of the French, and a Kingdom of France. There was Murat, later to be a King himself—until he was to face a firing party in an obscure Calabrian town. He, at any rate, attracted Josephine a little, because he was a dashing Hussar in an extremely chic uniform, with a roguish eye and a lovely pair of chestnut whiskers. But one and all of this strange coterie were deplorably provincial, speaking with accents one could cut with a knife, Corsican, Gascon, Marseillais, and they would persist, too, in interlarding their conversation with Republican and Democratic sentiments, with plenty of classical allusions, which might have sounded very well ten years ago, but were now hopelessly out of fashion.

But they were effective enough for their purpose, were these men. When the Sections rose Murat galloped with a squadron of Hussars to the artillery park at Sablons, dispersed a swarm of insurgents come for the same object, and returned in triumph with the guns in the nick of time. Bonaparte had galloped hither and thither posting his meagre forces, and the heads of the columns from the faubourgs were blown to shreds as soon as they appeared. No undisciplined mob could face artillery at that range, and the rebellion spluttered out like a damp squib. At one point that strange man Bonaparte saved a

nasty situation and possible further blood-letting by a timely witticism. A brawny lady of the Halles had been rating him in the language she had learned in years of street-corner oratory, rousing the mob by calling him a paid mercenary, fattening on burdensome taxes plundered from the poor.

“ Look at me, madame,” said Bonaparte, “ and tell me which is the fatter, you or I? ”

So the Sections were put down, and the Directory was supreme. Its minions had their reward. Bonaparte became commandant of Paris and general of division, with a free hand to promote his assistants, and to take what measures he thought fit to ensure the peaceableness of the capital. He was a much more important man now, and he had some money. True, his general's pay was in debased assignats, but a commander-in-chief in the French army at that time made a much more substantial income in other directions. And to a lady in Josephine's position he would probably at some time or other be an extremely useful friend.

Consequently it is not surprising that when, in obedience to Bonaparte's decree that the city should be disarmed, the police called at the Rue Chantierine and demanded the sword of the late lamented Beauharnais, Josephine should grasp at the opportunity and appeal through little Eugène to the Commandant against such desecration, following this up by a visit in person. Josephine could not have cared a jot one way or the other about Beauharnais' sword, but such an opportunity of an effective entrance, weeping, devoted widow, fatherless boy, and so on, was much too good to be missed. Some

accounts say nothing of this matter of the sword; some say that Josephine and Napoleon met in the ordinary course of social events; some say instead that this was their first meeting. To reconcile these conflicting authorities it is only necessary to make the slight assumption that Josephine had been introduced to Napoleon when Barras first employed him (as is obviously extremely probable) but had not taken much notice of him. When, however, he rose to eminence, she grasped this splendid opportunity of renewing the acquaintance under more favourable conditions.

Napoleon was in the first flush of that success for which he had hungered and thirsted during twenty-six years of burning youth. He had known hunger and danger in Corsica; he had suffered humiliation after humiliation in France. For some years as a lieutenant of artillery he had maintained himself and his brother Louis on his pay of thirty-six pounds a year. Not one of the pleasant things of life had ever come his way. Only after his promotion to the command in Paris did he buy his first silver-mounted dressing-case. He had had nothing to do with women—he could not afford it. Now at last things were looking a little more prosperous. In later years Napoleon displayed a knowledge unequalled of the psychology of the battlefield. At the moment when to minds less keen the struggle seemed to be still swaying evenly, he could detect the first faint indication that all was not well in the enemy's ranks. Then he would grasp at the opportunity and fling his reserves into the fight, following his hardly-gained advantage remorselessly until at last the enemy was

in flight. In this case the enemy was that Fate in which he believed so sincerely. The tide was turning in his favour, and now was the time to attack.

And Josephine was so sweet, so gracious, so clinging and yet so sure of herself. She had seen so much and done so much. She could mingle unquestioned with the throng of those great ones of government in whose gift lay everything that he wanted—money, power, military command. She was one of those aristocrats to whom he had had to raise his cap when he was a boy. She must have been a good woman, too, because she was so devoted to her late husband—as witness the incident of the sword. True, events had forced her into being more than friendly with that brute Barras, but that could really be excused because in Napoleon's opinion no woman could look after herself, not even the very best, once she was deprived of her natural protector. Doubtless Josephine told him (when matters had progressed so far), in little lisping love-words, that she had never, never cared for Barras at all, but the times were so cruel, and he was so pressing, and after all, he had saved her life and had some claim on her gratitude. There was something subtly flattering in having a woman in love with him who had loved her dead husband so dearly. For the years of living on her wits had at least taught Josephine two things (or it might be only one)—how to make love and how to say the right thing. Perhaps Barras, too, threw in a word in season, and, growing tired of Josephine, hinted that the man who took her off his hands would be largely rewarded—perhaps even with the command in Italy. To obtain that, on which his desires had

been fixed for so long, there was precious little that Napoleon would not do. He certainly would not flinch from deceiving Barras into thinking that he was doing him a favour rather against his will by marrying Josephine.

And Josephine? Nothing was new or surprising to her under the sun. That Bonaparte should have taken her tentative preliminaries so much in earnest was amusing, and also convenient. He was not nearly such a useful man to know as was Barras, of course, but to marry him did not mean the end of Barras. Napoleon's career was in Barras's hands, and—complaisant husbands (and complaisant paramours, for the matter of that) were not unknown, either under the Monarchy or the Republic. Napoleon himself seemed to be convinced that he was destined for great things. Josephine agreed with him and tried to conceal her yawns. Such talk was nothing new to her. Once she had had a husband whom the voice of envy had hailed as the Dauphin, and who had commanded the Army of the Rhine—a much more important matter than the command of the Army of Italy—and where was he now? Deep in an unknown grave with his spine divided by the knife of the guillotine. Naturally, if Napoleon should ever become really great, it would be very convenient; while he lived his contribution to her housekeeping expenses would be of assistance, while if he were killed in this absurd campaign he desired so eagerly her pension as a general's widow would be a settled income, and settled incomes are urgently craved by people of Josephine's precarious mode of life.

Should he by any mischance become a nuisance,

it was the simplest matter in the world to obtain a divorce under the law of the Republic, while it was just possible that the marriage would check the evil tongues which were wagging so freely about her and her private concerns. On top of all this, Josephine felt just then very old and very weary, and she must have looked on the marriage as a useful insurance against the inevitable day when Barras would cast her off.

And somewhere within her strange feelings stirred during Napoleon's wooing. Perhaps in all her life no one had ever told her that he loved her. Certainly Beauharnais never had, and one can hardly imagine a brutal cynic like Barras doing so. To women of Josephine's type, maybe even more than to others, words mean more than they will usually admit. True, their spell is fleeting, but at first they come as a welcome change from deeds. Napoleon did not stint his words. Having decided that it was for the best that he should fall in love with Josephine, he became, without conscious effort on his part, as devout a lover as later he became an imperialist Emperor. He poured forth passion in a stream of letters that would have touched the heart of a nun. Perhaps Barras, when he heard how the land lay, had put in a word with her as well. Perhaps, as a politician, he was not really anxious to have his name coupled with hers more than could be helped. So Napoleon was making Barras believe he did not love Josephine; Josephine was making Barras believe she did not love Napoleon, and at the same time was making Napoleon believe she did not love Barras; Barras was making everybody he could believe that

Josephine was and never had been anything to him ; while at the same time perhaps Napoleon was madly assuring Josephine of his passion for her, and Josephine was feeling just a little *éprise* with this madman from nowhere, but was insuring against possible later occurrences by remaining as friendly with the great man as she could manage. So the seedling of love, which never had much chance at any time, found itself from the moment of planting surrounded by these weeds of deception. It was choked to death, as was inevitable.

Josephine herself had yielded to Napoleon's entreaties sooner than might have been expected. Most likely Napoleon's suggestion of marriage came much later, and was a surprise to her. She had started out with the idea that it was a mere passing flirtation, differing a little from the usual kind because the wooer was so much in earnest and did not apparently mind making a fool of himself in his letters to her. That he should want to marry her after being admitted to the privileges he had attained was surprising but rather convenient considering all the circumstances, and so she fell in with the suggestion as soon as the command in Italy had been conferred on him.

The fact that Josephine was born in Martinique proved to be rather useful to her as it made it impossible for her to produce a birth certificate and enabled her to give her age as twenty-nine instead of thirty-two, while her husband gave his as twenty-eight instead of twenty-six. The marriage contract was much in Josephine's favour. She gave no dowry, and was expressly given full control over her children

by Beauharnais and over all her property. For that matter Napoleon distinctly states in the contract that he has no property whatever. As Raguideau, the notary, said, it was a "cloak and sword" wedding contract.

Two days after the ceremony Napoleon left for Italy, en route for Montenotte, Mantua, Rivoli and Leoben. Josephine stayed behind in Paris. Barras was there, too, and quite a number of other interesting and influential men.

CHAPTER V

THE STEPS TO THE THRONE

JOSEPHINE had never taken Napoleon seriously. On matters military her ideas were what might have been expected of the wife of an officer (an inefficient officer) of the old Bourbon army. In politics she had seen all the prizes borne off by the more unscrupulous or more eloquent or less timid of the competitors. Efficiency had had little to do with it. She could hardly be expected to equal the foresight of the best brain in England which predicted the end of the French Revolution in a military dictatorship. Soldiering in consequence meant little to her. That her new husband could possibly climb to supreme power as a result of military success was inconceivable to her—especially when it is taken into account that Beauharnais had lost his life as the result of an unsuccessful campaign. Pichegru, Dumouriez, generals without number had failed, and had sunk into extinction as soon as they encountered the opposition of the politicians. Compared with Barras, Napoleon was nothing. Besides, Napoleon only had command of the least important of the armies of the Republic, the least cared for (which meant entirely uncared for) and one which had never achieved any success worth mentioning. Small wonder that Jose-

phine had always treated Napoleon's rhapsodies about the future with inattention.

Now, as he went posting off to Italy, with his draggle-tailed aides beside him, he began that extraordinary series of love-letters which have surprised every student of his life ever since. Not a halt did he make, but he wrote to her, three, four, or even six times a day. He was on the way to lead the worst equipped army of Europe, mutinous to the core, against enemies twice their number, leaving potential enemies even more formidable behind him in Paris, but he managed to write to his wife. Strange letters they were, too, for a man as introspective as Napoleon. Their only possible explanations are that he was wildly in love with her, or that he thought he was (the cynic will say that this means the same thing), or that a life of continual repression was now making amends by the wildest loss of control. The most likely one is the second, that having decided on a course of action he proceeded to act up to the part for which he had cast himself, and by sheer self-deception escaped the self-ridicule which otherwise he could not have escaped.

The letters began to bore Josephine sorely. She was thirty-two, just the wrong age for the raptures of twenty-six. She realized that she would have to answer them, or some of them at least, and she had grown out of the ability to write such things. And if she did not reply in the same strain there would be further trouble. The first flush of her half-whimsical affection for the strange boy from the south was now over, and the more polished ardours of Barras began to regain their old attraction for her. Perhaps, if

she could have seen, as she languidly turned the pages wherein he wrote "Life seems to have no sorrow save that of separation from my beloved," that the same day he was writing the army order to his ragged legions that was to spur them on to the conquest of Lombardy and would in the end win her a throne she might have been more interested, but she could not. Besides, she had to interview her dressmaker regarding the gown she was to wear at the approaching reception at the Luxembourg.

Three weeks later the situation altered a little. Junot returned to Paris, no longer ragged, no longer poor, but instead a full Colonel glittering with gold lace, with a bandage over the wound received at Mondovi, and he bore the news that the Austrians had been driven back and the Sardinians utterly routed. Thirty-eight standards were somewhere behind him in a cart on the road to Paris. Bonaparte, by some miracle, had succeeded where everyone else had failed, and had humbled the King of Sardinia to the dust—even to the extent of treating with the upstart Republic and making it free of his hereditary domains. Paris was badly in need of a victory at that moment. 1795 had been a year of disappointments. Jourdain on the Rhine was setting out on the disastrous campaign of 1796. Taxation was appalling. The harvests had been bad. A little more strain on the Government and the Terror might lift its head again. But Junot brought the news that the King of Sardinia had handed over some much-needed millions to Bonaparte, while since the latter's army was at last on foreign soil it would not cost nearly as much to support. Naturally the Paris populace was

delighted. Bonaparte they hardly knew, but his wife, the beautiful Josephine, was the second most famous woman in Paris. She was applauded in the streets, in the theatre, wherever she appeared. Tradespeople were as eager to give her credit now as previously they had been reluctant. Barras and others were positively deferential to her—which must have caused her more joy than anything else. The dark cloud of life had at last displayed its silver lining.

In the midst of it all her unaccountable husband's whims took a new turn. He wanted to drag her away from all this delightful business so that he could have the pleasure of having her at his side. It was very annoying of him. Naturally, Josephine took no notice of such a ridiculous request. Besides, did not Bonaparte's bulletins roar of forced marches and privations borne bravely by the heroic troops, and of the storming of bridges under a hail of grape? Did Bonaparte think she was going to bear hardships like these? Never—especially when these same forced marches and gallant actions daily increased the respect with which she was treated by the Paris populace and by that brute Barras.

Another young man, too, had by now penetrated into her life. He was really good-looking, not in such a melodramatic style as Bonaparte's, but in one that would be much less wearing to live with. He was witty, too, and could make jokes all day long that made Josephine laugh until she cried. Josephine felt that she simply could not leave all these wonderful things just to live like a *cantinière*. Doubtless this M. Hippolyte Charles agreed with her.

But this wretched husband of hers persisted in

urging the insane project upon her. There was only one excuse left, and that would serve for a month or two. No sooner thought of than done. Josephine borrowed of the future at usurious interest and wrote to her husband that soon he would be a father.

Perhaps the storm she found she had raised by this action warned her that she was going too far. Napoleon, fighting for his life against Wurmser and the levies of Croatia yet found time to write back letters in which he implored her pardon for writing to her so brusquely. He was in an agony of remorse at having bullied her when she was in the act of fulfilling the desire of his life. The tenderness of his letters at this period can almost bring tears to the eye of the reader. They brought no tears to Josephine's, but they must have brought alarm to her heart. Hurriedly she wrote back saying that it was a false alarm. The return of post brought back an ominous warning. A palace was ready for her reception at Milan, and if she did not come to it at once, then Napoleon would resign his command and come and fetch her.

By now Josephine was thoroughly alarmed. Junot, who had brought the letter, waited to escort her back. The fascinating M. Charles managed to secure a staff appointment at Milan, and would accompany her as well. Josephine and her maid and her little pet dog and Junot and Charles set out for Milan. After all, it was a palace for which they were bound, which was some compensation for the loss of the pleasures of Paris.

Napoleon stole a few days from his army, and rushed back from the siege of Mantua to welcome

her. For a brief time the rapture of those early days of honeymooning was revived, but all too soon Wurmser came down from Friuli with Quosdanovitch marching parallel with him, and Napoleon had to rush back to drive him away. That was convenient for young Hippolyte Charles, who had kept discreetly in the background while the Commander-in-Chief was in the town. While Napoleon was engaged in solving in the sweat of his brow the problem which Carle Alberto so signally failed to solve fifty years after—namely, how to besiege Mantua and at the same time repulse a relieving force to whom half a dozen routes were open—Charles was busy solving the problem of how to relieve Citoyenne Bonaparte of some of the tedium of life away from Paris. People say he was as successful as was Napoleon.

Josephine was in a rather peculiar mood just at present. The realities of war naturally made no appeal to her at all. Gay uniforms and beautiful horses of course she liked, but the glory of victory and the thrill of the attack were quite beyond the range of her appreciation. Murat swaggering about her reception-room ogling the ladies she could understand, but Murat raving in front of the charging squadrons, mad with battle as the dragoons went crashing home upon the steel-rimmed squares might have been a being from another world for all the interest she was able to muster. These young men were all so very young. Marmont was a boy of one-and-twenty. How was she to appreciate the fact that this boy had handled the guns upon which hung the fate of nations at Ceva?

Even her husband was only twenty-six, and

accustomed as she was to middle-aged politicians she could not contrive to understand that the grim game against odds that he was playing was really something more than a game. The details of bread and forage and marches that absorbed so much of his time bored her inexpressibly. Having been dependent for her daily bread upon her social accomplishments for so long handicapped her in the proper appreciation of matters other than social accomplishments.

In Paris the beginning of the Directory had introduced a fashion of trifling and of ignorance, frequently real, of anything that mattered. Such a state of affairs suited her very well. But at Milan it was very different. Italian society, what little there was to merit such a name, was exasperatingly interested in such absurd things as politics. It was no excuse that after generations of Austrian dominion nothing was more natural than that they should desire a change of government. The imported French society was nearly as bad, because it was incapable of thinking about anything besides battles and brigades. It was very pleasant, of course, to be flattered and tactfully approached in the hope that influence might be used with her husband to induce him to grant this man promotion, or to lighten the levy on that town, but Josephine soon found that Napoleon would not tolerate any intrusion even by the wife he so vociferously adored into his own particular sphere. Small wonder, then, that Hippolyte Charles found himself fortunately situated in the race for her favour.

Other incidents were excessively annoying. With Mantua completely blockaded, Napoleon sent

for Josephine to Brescia. There for some days she had to endure the fervour of his protestations, which now had lost the charm of novelty and seemed to Josephine to be only vague bad taste. But all the time Wurmser the indefatigable had been rallying his battered army in Tyrol, and suddenly he came dashing down along the shore of Lake Garda, and nearly surprised Napoleon in his headquarters. It is said that Josephine's intuition saved her husband from capture, for she refused to stay in Brescia for one more evening as her husband wished her to do, for the purpose of attending a fête given by the traitorous Italian mayor. Because of this lucky stroke of telepathy, the couple had left Brescia by one road just before the Austrians entered by the other. The situation was desperate, for Wurmser's rapid march had cut the French communications, and Napoleon had to abandon the siege of Mantua while he fought for existence. Josephine he sent to try to reach Milan by way of the road along the south end of Lake Garda, but a stray Austrian gun-boat discourteously fired upon the carriage, killing the horses and frightening Josephine rather badly. Napoleon swore that Wurmser should pay in blood for the tears he had caused to flow, and so he did, later, at Bassano and Roveredo, but first Josephine, after an uncomfortable journey in one of the springless carts of the district, had to be got out of the way of Wurmser's mad bull-rush on Mantua. The last road to Milan left open lay past the guns of the fortress, and that road Josephine had to take, with the thirty-two pound balls of the Favorita guns singing all round her. She was badly ruffled in more than one way before she

reached the comparative comfort of the Serbelloni palace at Milan. It must have taken M. Charles all his time to smooth her down again.

Exactly how much this young scamp was to Josephine, and how much she was to him, is more than can be definitely decided. Half society believed the worst, but that is the way of society. Rumours spread even in the army, but Napoleon for the present heard none of them. But it is hardly likely that the rumours were based on any real fact, for Josephine, what with Barras and Napoleon, must have been sick and tired of men from that particular point of view. Her worst enemies call her licentious, but that is if anything an argument to the contrary—especially seeing that more than one of them (Barras for instance) contradicts himself immediately afterwards. Charles must have been a useful sort of companion, a pleasant change from serious soldiers and even more serious politicians with axes to grind, and in his light-hearted manner a blessed reminder of those dear days in Paris when a good pun was accounted more than a speech in the assembly, and a breach of etiquette worse than a lost battle. However it might be, on her return to Milan Josephine judged it best to take a holiday, and went off to Genoa on what seemed likely to be a very pleasant excursion. But it was woefully interrupted. Bassano and Roveredo had been won, Wurmser had been driven in utter rout into Mantua, and for a brief moment there was peace throughout Venetia and Lombardy. Napoleon came rushing back to his dear wife at Milan (he had only spent twelve days with her since their marriage) to find her gone. He pursued her with frantic, piti-

ful letters. For a man who had just conquered Northern Italy, when every French ruler from Charles VIII to Louis XIV had failed, he was singularly humble. Did Napoleon in after years, when the world was at his feet and this same Josephine was meekly imploring him for a little love, ever read any of those letters? It must have been with a twisted smile and an odd feeling in his heart if he did. But perhaps he only congratulated himself on the thorough way in which he had acted his part.

Back to Milan came Josephine, very cross at this interruption to her holiday, and then began one of the strangest six weeks of their strange lives. Barras and the Directory in Paris were growing restless because this new general was proving unpleasantly independent. He was making treaties and setting up new states right and left, refusing to make war on the Pope and on Naples when he was ordered to, and in general acting like a King instead of like a newly promoted subordinate. The Directory had to be soothed. The Pope and the King of Naples were restless. They did not like all the revolutionary talk and action that was going on in North Italy. Fresh states had to be created in Lombardy, and money and supplies had to be wrung from them simultaneously. Mantua had to be besieged and the Austrians closely watched. Napoleon was doing at once the work of at least six men, yet at all sorts of odd moments he would hurry back to the arms of his dear Josephine. So Josephine had to preside at all sorts of functions and be diplomatic in her letters to Paris and yet be always ready to soothe and comfort the overworked young man at any hour of the day

or night. It was one thing she was able to do to perfection, and perhaps it was her ministrations that turned the scale directly afterwards in that fierce death-grapple with Alvinzi. This alone made her worth her keep to Bonaparte—and Bonaparte did not seem to mind that she had learned the art with other busy men.

The Aulic Council had not yet despaired of the reconquest of Lombardy. In Tyrol and in Illyria a new army was assembling, and another general had been found to take up the struggle in which Beaulieu and Wurmser had been found so sadly wanting. Alvinzi and Davidovitch swept down from the mountains into the devastated Italian plains with sixty thousand men, and once more Napoleon had to take leave of Josephine to take up a task that would have daunted anyone. Ten wild days followed, every one of them as tense as that flaming June day four years later, when the fate of France hung trembling in the balance, and was only saved by Desaix's heroic charge across the tortured plain of Marengo. During these ten days, the earnest young men who bored Josephine so terribly spilt their blood in streams. Muiron died at Arcola, mourned by his chief. Napoleon himself was near to death when the Croats and the Pandours came charging at him through the marsh. Both armies were strained nearly beyond breaking point when fifty men of the Guides worked their way round the Austrian flank, and the high, clear call of the cavalry trumpets spread dismay through the ranks of the enemy. The day was won by the ruse, and Alvinzi, who had been so near to victory, was hurled back to the mountains and Davidovitch was shattered

to pieces on the plateau of Rivoli. Mantua was still unrelieved, and Napoleon was free for the moment to return to Milan and Josephine. Ten days had sufficed for the destruction of two armies. It took yet another six weeks for the Austrians to build up another army to renew the struggle, and during this time Napoleon had to keep the Directory quiet, and to ensure his rear against possible attacks by Papal troops or Neapolitans. He could not have found a better assistant than Josephine at this point, for all the intricacies of diplomacy were nothing to a woman who had had to earn her living by cajoling men like Barras. As a matter of fact, she was still in communication with Barras, and the artlessness of her letters must have gone a long way towards assuring that much mistaken gentleman that Napoleon was a harmless enough creature in the political world. Josephine told what she knew, and her husband had ensured that she did not know much.

Although Napoleon was obviously the coming man, Barras was still in power, and his enmity was dangerous—as Robespierre, for instance, had discovered. It was only human for Josephine to try to keep on good terms with him, just as Marlborough had tried to keep on good terms with James II after the Revolution, or, for the matter of that, as Murat and a dozen others were also doing. The result of their combined efforts was more satisfactory than anything Napoleon could have arranged with their consent. In his memoirs Barras complains of this “treachery.”

By the beginning of January, 1797, Alvinzi was once more ready to attempt the relief of Mantua.

Once more at Rivoli the two armies clashed together. But Napoleon was Alvinzi's master in tactics, as he was in strategy, and when Masséna came marching up just in time the Austrian attack collapsed, and the army went staggering back in total disorder. Mantua, smitten by plague and famine, at last surrendered, and Napoleon seized the opportunity to round on the Pope and secure his utter, abject submission. Then he swung back against the Austrians, to the command of whose army the Aulic Council had at last called their ablest general—the Archduke Charles, victor at Stockach and elsewhere, and incidentally uncle of a six-year-old child of whom he took small notice until, by a divorce and a marriage treaty, she became Napoleon's wife and Empress of the French.

Charles could effect nothing against the French on this occasion, drunk with victory as they were, and ruined as were his own forces. Three victories Napoleon gained in a week; the Archduke was pressed farther and farther back into the heart of Austria until at last the Holy Roman Empire humbled itself to the infant Republic and begged for terms when another week's marching would have brought the enemy to the outskirts of Vienna itself. At the moment Napoleon was the most prominent figure in Europe.

There is no need here to tell the story of the tortuous intrigues of Leoben and Rastadt, of the betrayal of Venice and of the foundation of the Cisalpine Republic; it is the business of the moment to follow Napoleon back to Josephine and the splendours of the palace of Monbello at Milan. The

most successful of men is only human when all is said and done, and at Milan a little ceremony was to take place which must have caused even Napoleon a few tremors. He had to submit his wife to the inspection of his family. As regards his brothers, Joseph, Lucien and Louis, he did not mind at all, for they were at the moment completely under his dominion, but it was far otherwise with his sisters and his mother. He had to "form into line of battle" to meet them. His mother, the widowed Letizia, was a woman of great force of character, thrifty, religious, and old-fashioned—everything, in fact, that Josephine was not. Not so many years had passed since she had beaten Napoleon with her own hands, and there is no doubting the fact that after her first encounter with Josephine she must have felt that she would like to repeat the process. No son's wife is in the opinion of his mother good enough for him (a critic once said that the most amazing lines in all English verse were those referring to "my son's wife, Elizabeth"), and when that son had been as successful as had Napoleon, and further had married without consulting his family or even letting them know of his intention, jealousy and honest disapproval were bound to follow. Doubtless, too, Letizia had heard some of the rumours about Barras, Charles, and half a dozen others, and was determined to disapprove at all costs.

The one circumstance in Napoleon's favour, and one which he used to the utmost, like the good general he was, was the fact that he, too, might find cause for complaint in some of the actions of his family,

His eldest sister Elise had recently been married to a fellow-Corsican, Bacciochi, who was, there was no denying it, a bad match. He was not wealthy nor of good family nor of good position, nor even did he possess commonplace good looks. But Elise had reached the age of twenty—she was an old woman, in fact, in the eyes of Letizia, and had better be married off to anyone who was fool enough to take her. To tell the truth, with all the Bonaparte daughters the sooner they were married off with a husband to look after them the better. Paulette, the second daughter, was now seventeen, and her behaviour up to the present had confirmed her mother in this belief. She could hardly be rude to Josephine and then ask Napoleon to help her in the task of finding a suitable husband for Paulette. Consequently for the moment strict neutrality prevailed, armed neutrality, but neutrality all the same. Pretty, fascinating, featherbrained Paulette was provided with a husband in the person of Leclerc, who was a dashing young infantry general of the mature age of twenty-four. In a few years' time it was to be his grenadiers who were to subvert a constitution in favour of his new brother-in-law, and he himself, after staining his honour indelibly by his treacherous capture of Toussaint L'Ouverture, was to die miserably of yellow fever on the pestilent coast of San Domingo.

But for the moment Paulette, her position secure, saw fit to give play to the instinctive dislike she felt for Josephine. At some time during the busy weeks at Mombello she contrived to have a brief private conversation with her brother. She hinted, she

whispered, perhaps she even produced some sort of evidence. Whatever she did, next day startled rumours spread through headquarters that young Hippolyte Charles had been suddenly arrested and was even now, it was said, under arrest and was awaiting the court-martial that would inevitably shoot him. Rumour exaggerated a little, as usual. Charles was indeed under arrest, but he was not shot. Instead, he was degraded from the army on a charge of receiving secret commissions from the contractors (which he probably had done) and was sent back to Paris in disgrace. There his contracting friends stood him in good stead, so much so that he soon built himself up a fortune and thereby became still more attractive in Josephine's eyes.

Why Napoleon did not have him shot, as he undoubtedly could have done, is more than can be said. Perhaps it is another proof of that incapacity of marked hatred which was so characteristic of him. Most probably, however, he did not believe all that Paulette told him. He would have been a fool if he did, generally, and even in this case it is difficult to believe that Josephine had been actually unfaithful to him with Charles.

But the incident was ominous. It marked the enduring hatred of the Bonaparte family for Josephine, and the beginning of the end of Napoleon's passion for her. Certainly from this time he never wrote to her in the wild strain he had always adopted before. There was drama heaped upon drama during these strange times at Milan, when the Treaty of Campo Formio was being arranged, new nations were being set up, old ones extinguished,

while Europe was being re-modelled, and Josephine's family life was being seriously interfered with. As events were to prove, Josephine's family life was much more important than any patched-up treaty.

It was this treaty, however, which was to take Napoleon for the moment from Josephine's side. Napoleon was summoned to the Congress of Rastadt and went willingly enough. From Rastadt he came to Paris, where he was hailed as the greatest general of France, the first since Turenne to extort peace from Austria by force of arms. It was nearly two years since he had left the capital, and in that time the populace had almost forgotten the little incident of the whiff of grape-shot that had been his first important step on the ladder.

The Directory received him at the most splendid fête their limited imaginations could devise. The rooms were draped with the flags won in the Italian campaign, and in the last room of the suite there was an altar to the Motherland. Talleyrand made a speech, Barras made a speech, Bonaparte made a speech. But perhaps the most amusing part of the proceedings to those who knew was when Barras embraced Napoleon beside the altar.

Meanwhile, Josephine had been enjoying in the south the fruits of her husband's victories. The southern departments were rejoicing at the victorious peace like the rest of France, and they found a rare opportunity in the fact that Josephine was travelling that way towards Paris. Each town in turn fêted her and made her presentations. When she arrived in Paris she brought with her enough trophies to

make it appear as if she, too, had just headed a victorious campaign. And on her arrival another fête awaited her. This time Talleyrand was her host. He entertained four thousand guests in her honour, and with a quaint harking back to old fashions, he substituted for the altar to the Motherland a shrine enclosing a bust of Brutus. Apparently no one was amused at the association of Brutus with Napoleon and Barras and Talleyrand and Josephine.

It was at this reception that Napoleon held the celebrated conversation with Mme. de Staël, in which he said that the woman he best loved was his wife; the one he esteemed most was the best housekeeper; and the one he would rank first among women was the one with most children. Seeing that his wife was perhaps the worst housekeeper in history, and that she bore him no children, there seems to be a contradiction here, but Mme. de Staël did not notice it. She was too much annoyed that her tender of friendship, semi-platonic in the best Romantic style, had been so tactlessly declined.

And now Josephine was back in Paris, the place she loved best in all the world, and Paris was at her feet. Moreover, there was at present plenty of money. During the campaign of Italy Napoleon had shown a moderation in money matters that surprised everyone. Masséna, Augereau, and others had acquired millions, but he himself had only pilfered to the extent of a mere two hundred thousand pounds, but this amount he expended in a fashion as lavish as even Josephine could desire. He bought the house in the Rue Chantierine which she had

rented before she met him, and he allowed Josephine to furnish it as she pleased. The gifts they had received from the Pope and from the sovereigns of Italy were nearly sufficient in themselves for this purpose, but Josephine brought all her exquisite taste to bear and finally achieved wonders. Here at last she held the salon for which her heart yearned. All the rich men, and all the powerful ones; all the beauty and all the wit of the capital came thronging to her drawing-room. The most powerful, and nearly the richest, was Barras, and of course Barras came. He came very often, said the voice of rumour. Napoleon was not there so very often. He knew the fickleness of the French mob too well to allow it to be bored by the sight of him, and the Directory were well content to let him stay away from the seat of power. Consequently he went off to the Channel coast to report on the practicability of an invasion of England, and while he was away Josephine did much as she pleased. Hippolyte Charles was in Paris, too.

Napoleon reported that an invasion of England was impossible *at present*, and clamoured for further command. The Directory were painfully anxious to get him out of France, him and the Army of Italy which worshipped him so devotedly. Perhaps Barras wanted to get rid of him for reasons other than political as well. However it was, someone, probably Napoleon himself, suggested the conquest of Egypt, and everyone's imaginations took fire at the thought. Napoleon dreamed of the conquest of the East and its teeming millions; of a march to India or of the taking of Constantinople and the attack on Europe in

reverse ; the Directory dreamed of a France free from his overshadowing personality while they had the full prestige of the victories he would gain ; perhaps Barras dreamed of a pleasant resumption of relations that had been interrupted before it quite suited him ; and Josephine—no one can tell what Josephine dreamed about.

Just as a preliminary, Switzerland was raided, and the treasuries at Berne and Geneva were pillaged to find funds for the expedition. At Toulon and Genoa the fleet and transports were fitted out with the utmost secrecy. Brueys was in command, with the bitter fate before him of death just after realizing that his blunders had caused the destruction of the splendid fleet entrusted to him. Somewhere on the same ship was a small boy, the son of the Fleet Captain, who was shortly to gain the supreme honour of having a poem written about him by Mrs. Hemans at the expense of being burned to death.

The troops went on board, Murat and Berthier and Davout among them—embryo kings and princes all of them—and also, in defiance of the Commander-in-Chief's strict order, one or two women in men's clothes. Chief among these was Marguérite Fourès, to whom shortly was to come the pleasure of living with the great man. Eugène de Beauharnais was there, too, earnestly keen, after his brief experience of war as his stepfather's aide-de-camp at the tail end of the campaign of Italy, to do well in the profession chosen for him. At last Napoleon embarked, and said farewell to his wife, who had accompanied him to the quayside. He promised as he said good-bye that he would send for her in three months. He

could not foresee that at the end of three months he would have no ship left out of all these hundreds to send for her.

Off he went to the conquest of the Orient, and Josephine returned to Paris, to Barras, and to Hippolyte Charles.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRUCIAL POINT

WITH her husband two thousand miles away, and all means of return cut off as far as anyone could tell, Josephine was as near independence as she ever was in all her life. The use she made of it was not such as met the approval of her rather exacting relations-in-law. Indeed, far less biased critics have expressed disapproval.

To begin with, there was the money question. Josephine acted up to the theory that to obtain the best from life it was necessary to spend twice her income. With her income doubled, she was thus able to quadruple her expenditure, nor was she deterred by the fact that her debts were thereby raised to a figure too unwieldy even for her to manage. Napoleon allowed her, through the agency of his brother Joseph, whom he had left in charge of his affairs, a yearly income of forty thousand francs—a very considerable sum for those times, even in Paris.

The first thing she did with this allowance (without it would be a more correct mode of expression) was to commit herself to the extent of three hundred thousand francs for the purchase of the house and estate of Malmaison. The only authority she had for this action was that Bonaparte

had liked the house while he was still in France. This was moderate, however, compared to the other purchases that she made, if purchases they can be called when the formality of paying is omitted. Josephine and her aunt, who had at last become Mme. de Beauharnais, between them bought national property in Belgium and elsewhere to the extent of *twelve hundred thousand francs*. Mme. de Beauharnais never paid a sou of this sum, and apparently never meant to. It is to be doubted if Josephine ever meant to, either, seeing that her whole allowance for thirty years would only just pay off the principal without counting interest.

This capital expenditure was over and above her usual spendings. For her ordinary needs she ran gaily into debt without a thought. She managed to cajole the wretched Joseph into exceeding the forty thousand francs allowed her, but most of these extraordinary contributions went at once in staving off the more pressing of her creditors. Five years before Mme. Bonaparte senior had been engaged in bringing up a family of seven children on rather less than two thousand francs a year. She was in consequence horrified, and while the majority of her children were not shocked at the extravagance as a sin against God, in the way Letizia was, they were, nevertheless, intensely jealous of her, seeing that none of them was yet in possession of the millions that Napoleon later bestowed upon them.

But quite apart from the money question, the Bonaparte family had grounds for concern. Malmaison was in a charming situation, it was true, and perhaps Josephine's story that Napoleon had approved

of her purchase was more or less correct, but they were quite sure that he had not taken into account the fact that it was near Chaillot, where Barras had a country house as well. In those old days before Napoleon had become commandant of Paris the same convenient system had prevailed, for Josephine had a house at Croissy, then.

There were other people besides Barras for the Bonapartes to chatter about. Young Hippolyte Charles reappeared, as merry and captivating as ever, and with the additional charm, in Josephine's eyes, of a considerable fortune. He came and he went, and more than one eye-witness has remarked that in Josephine's house at this time he seemed very much at home. How much reality there was in this appearance of unfaithfulness on Josephine's part will be discussed in the next chapter. It is sufficient for the present argument merely to assume that she was very indiscreet, and that most people with only appearances to guide them could only arrive at the conclusion that she was something more.

To Barras at this time there arose a formidable rival both in the field of politics and for Josephine's affections. This was Gohier. He was really a nobody, without talents or address to recommend him, but so low had the Directory sunk that he came to be included in it, and was even looked upon as Barras's successor. For after Napoleon's departure everything had gone from bad to worse. A few fleeting military successes, such as the occupation and "revolutionizing" of Rome and Naples counted for nothing in the general depression. The currency was debased beyond measure, the funds were so low

that even the Directory was appalled by the cost of further borrowings, the battle of the Nile had destroyed the fleet and put fresh heart into the enemies of France. Austria was once more moving, and even Russia was despatching armies against the unfortunate Republic. Consequently Barras was generally regarded as certain to fall, and to succeed him there was apparently no one. Siéyès had devised a new constitution—that was a habit of his—and was looking for a man “with a head and a sword to help him impose it upon the state.” He found no one, for Moreau was honest, Masséna intent merely upon riches and glory, and the political generals like Bernadotte and Championet were none of them powerful enough for his purpose. Consequently, Gohier was the only possible successor to Barras, and to him everyone paid court. Josephine did so, and it is believed that he fell a more complete victim to her charms than did Barras.

He had several desirable characteristics as a lover, apart from his advanced age. He was married to a wife who did not take too embarrassing an interest in his business. He had an ample income, and he had acquired such a reputation for austerity during those early days of the Republic when statesmen were expected to possess all the characteristics of the great men of history that it even withstood the attacks made upon it in later times. To cement the union with this perfect gentleman who had once been Fouquier-Tinville’s guide in the prosecutions under the Terror, she even proposed to follow the example set by her excellent aunt and marry her young daughter Hortense to Gohier’s son.

All this must have been simply maddening to the Bonapartes. In the Council there was a small faction favourable to Napoleon, consisting mainly of his brothers Joseph and Lucien. Their sternest opponents were Gohier and his supporters. Josephine was spending her husband's money too freely, she was disgracing herself and him by her behaviour with various men, and to crown it all she was publicly allying herself with his deadliest political enemies. The only doubtful point in the estimation of the Bonaparte family's feelings is guessing which of these proceedings annoyed them most.

Perhaps Josephine is to be excused. She had had a terrible time during the Revolution, and it can well be understood that she was determined that under no circumstances would she risk any further experience of the kind. The only way to make sure of this was to be in favour with the man in power, and on all sides she heard that Gohier was the man who was most likely to be in power. Her mistake lay in the fact that she did not realize that it was Napoleon himself who would be in power before very long, and there she erred in good company.

Disaster followed disaster for unhappy France. The terrible Suvaroff appeared in Italy at the head of the Austrian and Russian armies. He was the man who had stormed Ismail on the Danube—Augereau could have told Josephine about that, for at that time he was a soldier in Suvaroff's army—and later he had stormed Praga and put thousands of Poles to the sword. Now he had overrun Italy. He had beaten Moreau, he had beaten Macdonald. Joubert had met his death at Novi, amid the flying wreck of almost

the last army France could assemble. For the moment the Aulic Council had spoilt their own cause by diverting him to Switzerland, and Masséna had shattered the Russians under Korsakoff in the wonderful victory of Zurich. But the clouds were still dark on the horizon. There was no victory on the Rhine; in Italy the situation changed from bad to worse. The only touch of relief came from Bonaparte in the East. Where everyone else recounted defeats, his dispatches roared of victories under the Pyramids, of victories at Nazareth and Gaza, and finally of a crowning mercy at Aboukir, where his worn veterans had destroyed an army of twice their numbers and had slaughtered them almost to a man. One of the few survivors had swum to the English ships in the offing. He was an Albanian renegade, and it was fated that he would eventually rule Egypt himself, and be the ancestor of a long line which as Khedives, Sultans, and Kings, would carry on the name of Mehemet Ali.

But the East was far away, and the danger on the frontiers was imminent and pressing. There were murmurs in Paris, and they were echoed in the provinces. The wretched Directory had neither the prestige nor the strength of character to proclaim the danger of the fatherland. Everywhere there were hints of rebellion. There were plots to raise the barricades once more in the streets of Paris. The White Terror was once more loose in the Vendée. The Red Terror was showing in the clubs. Under the combined threats of foreign invasion and internal chaos the country was in a nightmare of apprehension.

And then suddenly the god descended in his

machine. Napoleon landed, unheralded and unhopèd for, at Frejus in the south. At once the nightmare was dissipated. Everyone remembered the campaign of '96, only three years ago, when he had cleared Italy of the Austrians and had filled the treasuries of France with plundered gold and her cathedrals with captured standards. And had he not just returned from victories as marvellous as Alexander's in the East? The people knew nothing of the innumerable unsuccessful assaults upon Acre, nor of the thousands of prisoners he had massacred upon the beach at Jaffa. They had not heard of the dark stories which were whispered in the army he had deserted about certain invalids who had died in the hospitals at Acre at the very moment that he found he had not sufficient transport to carry them away. The people knew of none of these things. All they knew was that a deliverer had arrived, and as a deliverer he was hailed in every town from Frejus to Paris.

But those in power heard of his arrival with fear in their hearts. One or two brave spirits proposed arresting him on a charge of deserting the Army of the East, or for his breaking of quarantine, but the government simply had not the prestige to do this. Hopelessly they realized that inevitably he would be at the head of the state before two months were up, and they would be cast upon an ungrateful world.

Nevertheless their fears were as nothing compared with Josephine's. She heard the news at a pleasant little supper-party at Gohier's. An hour before, perhaps, she had been congratulating herself on the fact that her husband was two thousand miles away, and had rejoiced at the apparent success of her

negotiations for the marriage of her daughter to the son of the future ruler of France. Suddenly a courier arrived to inform them that her husband was in France, and was following hard behind, and her panic-stricken fellow-guests told her breathlessly that he was travelling as fast towards a throne as towards Paris.

Josephine realized, horrified, how much she stood to lose at the same time as she realized how near she was to losing it. There were her appalling debts, nearly two hundred thousand pounds in all. There was her proposal to marry her daughter to the son of his most powerful enemy. But worse than all this, a thousandfold, were the terrible stories (not a bit true, she hurriedly assured herself) which were in circulation about her behaviour with Barras, with Gohier, with that worthless fellow, Hippolyte Charles. There was no hope whatever that he would not hear these stories, for his mother and his sisters and his brothers would all rush to tell him them the instant he arrived. Divorce was easy—and even if it had been difficult her position would not be secure. Napoleon might even kill her in a burst of Corsican rage. There was only one weapon left in her armoury, and that was the well-tryed one of her personal charm. But how was she to use it? At the first hint of such news Napoleon would be sure to refuse to have anything to do with her. The only course left open to her was to hurry to meet him, and re-capture him before those hateful sisters of his could poison his mind.

No sooner thought than done. The morning after the receipt of the news she left Paris by the Burgundy road, urging her postillions to greater and

greater efforts every moment, and peering forward as the chaise jolted along the road for the first sight of his carriage. But that first sight never came. When Josephine arrived at Lyon she found that he had taken the Bourbonnais route and was by now in Paris. The Bonapartes would have first turn with him after all, and she was on the verge of ruin.

Bonaparte was by no means the same man as when he had set out for the East. Someone at some time during that ill-fated expedition had told him about some of Josephine's early adventures. It may have been Junot, his devoted aide, who had resisted her blandishments during the old days at Milan. Perhaps Murat, that swaggering Gascon boaster, had told in his cups of some occasion when Josephine had tried to charm him, and had embroidered the narrative in his usual fashion. It might be that at last some confirmation of Pauline's stories about Hippolyte Charles had come to his ears. However it was, Napoleon had already been dallying with the idea of divorce, and while in Egypt he had been for the first time unfaithful to his wife. Mme. Fourès, the favoured lady, he had forcibly divorced from her husband, and she was to follow him by the first available boat. Consequently when he arrived in Paris and found his wife was not at home, and was promptly informed by his family of her behaviour during his absence, he decided almost without further hesitation to end the incident once and for all. He had been married to Josephine for nearly four years now, and during that time he had not lived with her for more than a few months.

But at present there were matters awaiting his

attention even more important than divorce. Siéyès came to him with his constitution, all nicely balanced and weighed and apparently perfect—on paper. Augereau and Bernadotte and Lefebvre wanted to know what he had decided upon, and what price their influence with the army was worth. Joseph and Lucien were full of schemes for subverting the constitution they had sworn to uphold. Barras and his confederates were plotting fiercely for his disgrace, for his assassination even, if necessary. If he did not destroy the government the government would destroy him. He would perish by the guillotine as the traitor and rebel that he really was. He was wrapped in a wave of intrigue the instant that he arrived in Paris.

Into the midst of this turmoil arrived a tearful, clinging woman, wild with fear lest he had already taken some irrevocable step. She flung herself at his feet and implored his pardon. Napoleon tried to be firm. He locked his door against her. He refused to see her unless some other person were present. But fate was too strong for him.

Somewhere within him there was a strong vein of superstition. He could not forget that his first triumphant campaign coincided with his first association with Josephine. Nor could he forget that a royal future had been predicted for Josephine. Should he cast her off, she would throw all her not inconsiderable influence against him. That future throne she might well share with Gohier, in that case, while he went on a tumbril to the Place de la Revolution.

But besides all this there was another important

factor which it was impossible to overlook. The Paris of that time regarded the wronged husband with much the same eyes as did the London of the Restoration. It is hardly different now. Were Napoleon to publish his shame by obtaining a divorce, all the capital would ring with the mockery of his enemies. The gamins would sing little impromptu ditties about the man who sought a kingdom but was incapable of looking after his wife. His future success, if any, depended entirely upon the goodwill of the people, and that fickle body would not place their whole national well-being in the hands of a self-proclaimed cuckold.

And Josephine by now knew well enough how to appeal to him most effectually. She could recall to him all sorts of happy memories. She could remind him, unobtrusively, but in a manner which tore at his heartstrings, of the times when he had knelt at her feet and had kissed her hands. She might even quote to him some of the little speeches he had made to her in the days when he was the most ardent lover in France. And she was still so sweet, so charming, that it was maddening to think that she might never more be his and might well be another's. Jealousy of the past was nothing compared with jealousy of the future.

Lastly came her children; Eugène bronzed with the sun of Egypt and causing his conscience to prick him mercilessly about the time when he had made him, as his aide-de-camp, ride beside the carriage in which he was driving with Marguérite Fourès through the streets of Cairo; and Hortense, young and exquisitely beautiful, very like her mother, and a

favourite of his ever since early days in the Rue Chantierine. The strain was too much to bear in the end, and Napoleon yielded.

Next day came Lucien, to keep his brother up to date in the affairs of the Council of the Five Hundred, and to arrange the last details of the approaching divorce. Napoleon received him in bed, and beside him was Josephine. She had won the greatest of her victories. It was her last victory, too.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST LADY OF EUROPE

A BALD list of deeds can in no way be called a biography. There must in addition be some attempt at defining the motives for those deeds, as well as an examination into the possibilities of alternative actions. A history only differs from a collection of facts in the possession of a good many more "ifs."

With Josephine the "ifs" are enormous and the facts relatively few. To guess at a man's motives is a task frequently attempted, and it is generally conceded that it is one which stands a fair chance of success. To guess at a woman's is thought by most people to be attempting the impossible. To guess at Josephine's is harder still. The way towards one's conclusions lies between the two abysses of quixotism and cynicism—or squeamishness and Freudian exhibitionism, if the rendering is to be preferred.

It is difficult to imagine Josephine's state of mind. She was scantily educated—all that her father could find to recommend her in that momentous letter to the Marquis de Beauharnais was that she was "of a sweet disposition," that she could play the guitar a little, and had a pretty voice. We have already seen what the learned seventeen-year-old Beauharnais

thought of her. Seeing that all the schooling she had had was acquired during four years at an inferior convent school it is not to be wondered at. To warp this impression of her is the added fact that in matters doubtless more useful to a woman of the world than the binomial theorem and kindred subjects she was both experienced and naturally gifted. She had as keen an instinct for decoration as her second husband had for war. Of the grosser psychology of her fellow-men she had a wide knowledge—too wide, perhaps. This was a result of her experiences in the middle period of her life. If she had handled Beauharnais with the skill she displayed to Bonaparte the history of France might have been different. But her knowledge of men was limited to individuals. Of men in the mass she knew nothing. She was never able to gauge the strength of the position of men dependent on the popular will in consequence. Thus she nearly backed the wrong horse by going over to Gohier instead of standing by her husband.

This leads us to the consideration of that trait in Josephine's character about which nearly as much ink has been spilt as in the discussion of a more interesting one. The one is her venality, the other her immorality. Josephine was mercenary, there is no denying it. The world had treated her badly, and had driven some cruelly hard bargains with her. At sixteen she had been handed over to a loose-living young pedant, who promptly began a course of action calculated to break her heart if she had one. At thirty-one she went in fear of her life for months at a time, and was finally dependent for her living solely upon her wits and her beauty. It was in a sense only

natural she should accept for these the highest bidder. Josephine dreaded poverty ; she dreaded danger ; she liked gaiety and she liked to lead fashion. In fact she was quite like a number of other women. Had she taken any means other than the ones she did employ to ensure the absence of danger and the possession of a position in society she could not have been called mercenary. But since these likes and dislikes of hers were so marked, and because she chose to gratify and obviate them by the only method open to a woman in those days, she must be judged mercenary, simply because a woman is mercenary who prefers her comfort to the Ten Commandments. But when the alternative is as appalling as Josephine had reason to think it would be a woman is to be excused for being mercenary even by us paragons of pharisaical virtue.

Josephine had the misfortune to be the wife of one Emperor and the grandmother of another, both men who were violently disliked by powerful and eloquent parties, and the question of her virtue became one of national (or, at least, political) importance. It weakened Napoleon III's position a little to say that the lady who was at once his grandmother and his aunt was a vile woman, and consequently his opponents had no hesitation in saying it. The imperialists rushed to the opposite extreme and declared that she was a pattern of all that could be desired. Thus it happens that the evidence either way is suspect and partial. If it be once admitted that there are gradations of virtue the difficulty is avoided. A woman who is more virtuous than those with whom she mixes by force of circumstances, a



FOUCHÉ, DUKE OF OTRANTO
FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

woman, in fact, who is better than the average, cannot be called vicious if virtue and vice are comparative. And not the most malicious calumniator has ever said that Josephine was the most vicious of all the vicious women who thronged the salons of the Directory. It was not through lack of temptation, either.

It has already been suggested, in a Jesuitical spirit, earlier in this book, that perhaps a woman who does not flinch from a fall from virtue in order to gain her end should rather be commended for her strength of mind than condemned for her wickedness. The flaw in this argument is that a lapse is not an isolated incident. It bears moral consequences that are quite as important as the lapse itself. A woman who has yielded once will yield the next time under less provocation, and so on indefinitely. This is what happened to Josephine.

Barras and one or two others of the detractors hint that Josephine's behaviour was more actively unchaste than this, and, after all, Barras was in a position to know, but he is much to be doubted. Josephine never distinguished herself by the eccentricities of costume that made Mme. Tallien's appearances so historic, nor do we find her associated with any of the really evil livers of the period. As has already been said, she was more chaste than the majority, at a time when chastity was a subject for jest. That is at least a consolation prize of merit.

Her affection for her husband up to the time of the Consulate presents a very interesting study in psychology. There is no doubting the fact that Napoleon must have rather carried her off her feet by the impetuosity of his wooing; it is very likely

indeed that she had never before met a man who addressed her in the sort of language one would expect from Sir Philip Sydney ; it is unlikely that she expected him to offer marriage to her, seeing that she had complied with his desires before he suggested such a formality. He was not then at all the sort of man she was likely to marry, for he was not polished, he was not yet distinguished as a politician, and he was in no way numbered with the great. Hoche, Moreau, even Jourdain had a far better chance than of obtaining the supreme power. He must undoubtedly have taken her rather by surprise. The haste with which the marriage ceremony was arranged points to the same end. Josephine found herself married before she had time to weigh the matter fully, and naturally she began to regret it as soon as her new husband had gone and his intoxicating personal influence was removed. His wild letters became a little boring. As for battles and conquests and sudden death, they did not appeal to her in the least. Josephine was a woman, and for some years she had seen women all round her exercising their immemorial privilege of changing their minds. Consequently the men she met who most differed from the man of whom she had recently had a surfeit stood most chance of capturing her interest, and one or two of them did. Thanks to her first husband, she had never had much to do with the gentlemen of the old régime, and Barras's oily manners and Charles's high spirits seemed to her to be the best that man could show in the way of polish and wit. Perhaps Barras became pressing once more, too, for he was just the type of man to whom a woman appeals

more because she has passed through another man's hands.

The conquest of Italy meant that Josephine was free for the time being of petty cares regarding money, and she more or less let herself go in consequence. With her husband apparently shut up indefinitely in Egypt, the last check upon her was removed, while it is even possible that the carping criticisms of the Bonaparte family reacted upon her in the opposite manner to which they were intended. Insecurity was in the air, and she determined to make the best of life while it lasted—especially if, as in the case of her flirtation with Gohier, she was insuring herself against official disfavour in the highly probable event of a change in the Government. What she did not foresee was that it was her husband who would rise to power.

It may even be that we are doing Josephine an injustice in making this last statement. It is possible that she did not care who was to be eminent in the future, but merely followed the dictates of her heart during the present. To some minds it is as great a sin to obey one's heart as to obey one's head. If this had ever been said to Josephine she would probably have replied that there is no pleasing some people.

During the conquest of Italy and afterwards in Paris she had tasted some of the sweets of power. They did not attract her vastly. She thoroughly enjoyed having all the money she wanted to spend, and influencing fashion solely by her own whims, but it depressed her rather than elated her to think that the lives and fortunes of millions of people might be influenced by her actions. But nevertheless the

advantages did outweigh the disadvantages, and when on Napoleon's return from the East she found that she might be the first lady in France through her connection with him she decided that she did not want to lose the chance. Most probably this was not the ruling motive of her actions. Her love for Bonaparte must still have existed even if suppressed, and it must have welled up again redoubled when she heard of his return from the plague-stricken East and all its attendant dangers. With her out of sight might be out of mind, but the reaction was violent when it came. She flung herself into the task of wooing her husband back to her, and, the Fates assisting her, she was successful. What she gained for herself was ten years of married unhappiness, and then she at last received the blow which she had been dreading all that time. In return she received fame, position, and the privilege of having books written about her.

CHAPTER VIII

THE QUEENING OF A PAWN

NAPOLEON was plotting the downfall of the Directory and his own elevation to the supreme power. Wheels were working within wheels. He had first to obtain a military command for himself, and then to see that his new army was devoted to his interests. His minions worked with him. Berthier sounded the officers of the Staff, Lannes those of the infantry, Marmont those of the artillery, Murat those of the cavalry. His brother Lucien was President of the Council of the Five Hundred, and could be relied upon to betray his trust and play into Napoleon's hands. His brother Joseph was prominent in the Council of Ancients and in the higher diplomatic circles, and would sow the seed there. There still existed a genuine Republican party, but one of its staunchest supporters, Lefebvre, had fallen, almost without knowing it, under the spell of Napoleon, while of those who were only attached to it from interest the chief, Bernadotte, was Joseph's brother-in-law and could be relied upon to dilly-dally long enough for the blow to be struck. But it is hopeless to plot against a government without knowing what the executive of that government is capable of doing, and

the only one of Napoleon's circle who knew anything about the plans of Barras, Gohier, and company was Josephine. In two directions her services were invaluable, for not only was she in possession of first-hand information, but she was also able to quiet the fears of the Directory until the time came for those fears to be justified. She was kept a little in the dark about what was being planned, not from any fear of her betraying her husband, but because her ignorance misled the executive to an extent which proved fatal to them.

At last the blow was struck, and it proved completely successful. Thanks to Lucien, the fateful meeting of the Council of the Five Hundred was held at St. Cloud, away from the possible interference of the police and the mob. Talleyrand kept Barras busy, and Josephine saw to it that Gohier was also kept out of mischief by inviting him to come to meet her for a conference on important matters. Gohier saw through the ruse in the end, but too late to do anything effectual. The Council of Ancients gave way with hardly a murmur. The Five Hundred were less amenable. For a brief space it seemed as if they would cause serious trouble, but Lucien spoke frantically and gained Napoleon a moment's breathing space, and then Murat and Leclerc came marching into the hall at the head of the Grenadiers and the Government came to an end.

Very early the next morning a carriage drove from St. Cloud to the Rue de la Victoire, and in it were Napoleon and Lucien and Siéyès, the three leading spirits of the conspiracy. From their lips Josephine learned that the *coup d'état* of Brumaire

had been successful and that her husband was now the almost absolute master of France.

It must have seemed to her like the millennium, for when Napoleon did a thing he did it thoroughly, and in the height of the reconciliation he had promised to pay off those debts which had been worrying Josephine ever since his return. Their amount was enormous—nearly five million francs. For some of it there was something to show—for example, the Belgian property and Malmaison, and some furniture and a little jewellery. But the greater part of it had been simply frittered away, and no attempt had been made to pay off any of the liabilities. With regard to the national property in Belgium there may have been a reason not at once apparent for this indifference. It was practically in the gift of the Directors, and as matters stood before Napoleon's return from Egypt Josephine was not likely to be pressed for payment. However it was, Napoleon called for a complete statement of debt—the first of many. Timidly Josephine produced the colossal figures. On this occasion Napoleon made no trouble with her over them, but he stormed at the tradesmen and the agents who had inveigled her into making the purchases. He reduced the amounts arbitrarily, cutting off whatever percentage seemed right to him, and on this occasion the tradesmen were badly caught. It was a good method of reducing Josephine's credit so that it would not occur again, but it did not meet with the success one might have expected, because in their subsequent dealings with Josephine the tradespeople made allowance for this peculiarity of her husband's and added to their

prices to her to an extent which covered both the risk and the reduction. For the rest of her life Josephine was not to know what it felt like to be out of debt.

The *coup d'état* had left the Luxembourg vacant, and the very next day the new Consul moved into it. The vague beginnings of a Court became noticeable. Here and there folk began to address each other as Monsieur and Madame. Napoleon's eagle eye was on the watch for any breach of decorum, and the mad, glad days of the Directory came to an abrupt end. No longer could a lady appear "*décolletée* to the knees" as a wit once expressed it. If one were even to wear a gown that would have hardly caused a second thought in Barras's salon the First Consul would order the fires to be made up, or would inform "the lady in the attire of a Hottentot" that the present reception was not an affair of fancy dress.

One of Napoleon's ambitions was to reconcile the emigrés and the old aristocracy to the new régime. In this he was assured of the support of his wife, whose fondness for the old nobility soon became notorious. Indeed, she went much further than he in this direction, for at the time when no one in France would have been surprised if he had followed the example of Monk and had recalled the old royal family she threw all her influence into the same scale. She would have been happy if she could have seen Louis XVIII on the throne, and herself and her husband the foremost in his Court. She saw nothing incongruous in the idea of Napoleon as a subject of the dilettante, lazy Louis. The idea of him as Constable of France, and perhaps the Maréchal Duc de Bonaparte, appealed to her strongly. It

may only have been a yearning for security of tenure, or it may have been that she lacked the ability to see herself Empress of the proudest Empire in Europe.

To occupy Napoleon's attention as well, came the marriage of Murat and Napoleon's youngest sister, Caroline, the most capable and cold-hearted of them all after the great man himself. Josephine supported the match, rather in opposition to her husband, who had already mentally allocated Caroline to Moreau, or, failing him, wished to reserve her until he could arrange some other match for her equally advantageous for himself. But Moreau declined the honour; Caroline was hotly eager, for the swaggering hussar had not only caught her fancy but she saw in him just that combination of minor military skill and total stupidity which would gain for him promotion under Napoleon and yet would leave him completely under her thumb. Josephine, anxious to gain an ally among the Bonapartes, helped Caroline, and at last Napoleon grudgingly gave way and consented to what he called disparagingly a *mariage des amourettes*. Caroline made no return for Josephine's good offices. Now that she was free from school and was a married woman and treated as an adult she flung herself into the stresses of family strife and became the fiercest and most unrelenting of all Josephine's enemies.

When the results of the plebiscite began to arrive, and it was clear that a huge majority was in favour of the government of Napoleon, he decided to take one of the most definite steps towards the throne by occupying the Tuileries. The Consuls drove thither

in a carriage drawn by six white horses; the greater officials followed them in cabs, for the Revolution had left few carriages in Paris, and the proceedings terminated, as did every ceremony over which Napoleon had control, in a review. Josephine was there before him, for she was seated in the palace to watch the arrival of the incongruous procession. It had taken Josephine twenty years to reach the Tuileries, but she was there at last.

During all this minor business, Napoleon was preparing to enter upon the most important campaign of his whole life. There was no army ready-made for him to lead against the enemy who was pressing so close to the sacred frontiers of France; he had to improvise one. While for the benefit of spies he seemed to be doing everything but attending to the army, in reality he was urging his lieutenants to their utmost endeavours to organize a force with which he could strike a decisive blow. Then with much pomp and circumstance he reviewed a wretched force of invalids and cripples at Dijon, which was all that the spies could find of the Army of Reserve, and after that, moving the real army in detachments with the greatest possible secrecy, he set forth upon the most desperate enterprise he ever undertook. The Austrians were besieging Genoa, where Masséna held out undeterred by the fact that his troops had less food than would support life, while the population had none at all. Some of the enemy had even advanced as far as the Var, the actual frontier of France, when suddenly Napoleon appeared without warning across their rear, at the head of an army apparently sprung from the earth. He had passed

the Alps. Incidentally, he had made it necessary for him to pass the Alps again with an enemy behind him if by chance he should be defeated, but it was worth the risk. Genoa had already fallen (he was too late to prevent that) but while the astonished Austrians strove to rally their extended forces, he pushed boldly forward to come to grips with them. At Marengo the enemy, determined to break out of the trap, flung themselves upon his army, and Napoleon in turn was surprised, for he had not then expected to be attacked, and half his forces were absent looking for the enemy. But somehow he held his men together until the missing divisions arrived, and at last he gained the victory which would confirm him in the dictatorship of France.

Had he been able to have exactly his own way throughout the campaign, he could not have wished for events to take any other course. He had gained a rapid victory, enabling him to return at once to Paris to confront his enemies; he had gained it by a manœuvre unmatched since the days of Hannibal; it was an enormous success in itself, winning back for France the whole of North Italy at a blow; the actual fighting was full of dramatic incidents bound to appeal to the people whom he ruled; and to crown it all, Desaix, the man to whom he most owed the victory, had died on the field, and there was no one to be specially rewarded.

After a few days of triumph at Milan, during which he indulged in a casual love-affair with Grazzini, the Italian singer, he returned to Paris with a stronger hold on the public than he was ever to have later, even after Austerlitz. But on his

arrival at the Tuileries he was to plunge into stresses more violent even than Marengo.

Josephine was at grips with the Bonaparte family. None of them liked her, and now their ranks had received a welcome reinforcement in the person of Caroline, newly married and free from tutelage. There were already whispers that Napoleon had determined to make the Consulate hereditary in his family, but what was the good of that when he had no heir to succeed him? If Josephine should bear him a son, his position would be vastly strengthened. If not, then he had better divorce her and get another wife who would. Especially if the new wife were more to the taste of the Bonaparte family, and more ready to be influenced by them. It was in vain that Josephine pleaded that it was not her fault that she had borne Napoleon no children, and pointed out that by Beauharnais she had become the mother of Eugène and Hortense. "Ah, sister, you were younger then," said Caroline spitefully. Letizia Bonaparte's contempt and hatred for her daughter-in-law increased every day. Not only was Josephine unable to give Napoleon the son whom they all craved (an inability which must have annoyed the stern old woman who had herself borne at least thirteen children), but the main leader of the anti-Josephine party was Lucien Bonaparte, who was naturally Josephine's worst enemy, therefore; and Lucien was Letizia's favourite child.

It was the beginning of that demand from all sides for an heir to Napoleon which was to cause Josephine such bitter anguish and was to end in her

being cast off by the husband to whom she had been married thirteen years.

It was to this atmosphere of palace intrigue and hatred that Napoleon returned, and in addition there were other intrigues and hatreds which called for all his attention. The Royalists and the Jacobins were plotting his removal, whether by assassination or by rebellion was immaterial to them, and there were not wanting signs that these two parties, so diametrically opposed in most of their aims, were uniting in this one.

Then there was the constitution to be settled, and when Napoleon had contrived to obtain all the power possible, he had to make use of it. The codification of the law had to be arranged, and the war with Austria and England prosecuted at the same time as peace negotiations called for the utmost attention. Napoleon was about to embark on that frantic period of toil which was to last the rest of his life, and which, it is only fair to add, he thoroughly enjoyed.

Josephine, meanwhile, had been setting her house in order and settling on that plan of behaviour which was to stand her in good stead later. Some of the resolutions she made went all too soon the way of all good resolutions, but in the main Josephine was a perfect wife to Napoleon for as long as he allowed her to be. There was to be no more risky flirtation with men. That was certain, and Josephine kept to it. Then, too, Napoleon was obviously heading towards Royalty, and it behoved Josephine to cultivate all the little graces a queen must display. She must remember every face and every promise, she must

never be late, she must say the right thing at the right time. She must be prepared to guide the fashions so that her country would reap the benefit. She must be regal in attire and in bearing, yet ready to unbend at the right moment.

Josephine conscientiously set out to achieve all this, and she succeeded. She was naturally helped very considerably by her previous training. If all queens had to live for a period on their wits before ascending the throne, they would occupy as a class a more conspicuous position in history. Her tact had been favourably noticed even before this, at a time when there was no temptation to comment on this "truly royal" attribute. Her figure was perfect, and her exquisite taste in clothes helped this effect, although, alas, Josephine's complexion was beginning to show signs of the passage of the years. From even before the Revolution it had been fashionable for women to rouge and powder heavily, and this, although it may have helped materially in spoiling Josephine's complexion, now came to her rescue and made it easy for her to hide her signs of age. Indeed, she influenced Napoleon's opinions on the subject very considerably, so that he once committed himself to the statement that "Two things well become a woman, tears and rouge." Later he was frequently known to tell ladies in his Court that they looked too pale, and to command them forthwith to go and apply the needed colour.

Beside her tact and her figure, Josephine acquired (it certainly was not born in her) the other "royal attribute" of punctuality. Only twice during all the ceremonies and excursions arranged by Napoleon

was she ever late—and on one of these she saved her life by her delay.

At the Tuileries matters were making giant strides towards a semblance of Royalty. Napoleon had once laughingly called to Josephine, “Now, you little Creole, come and sleep in the bed of your masters,” and indeed the old Royal apartments and much of the old Royal ceremonial were in use. Many of the bright particular stars of the Directory society had gone, much to Josephine’s sorrow. Mme. Tallien was not there, and Mme. de Staël did not stay long, but instead there came the first beginnings of the return of the Royalists. Rochefoucaulds and even a few Rohans were to be seen again at the Tuileries, some of them having come for what they could get, and some really attracted to the great man who was at last giving France peace. But they were very dull. All the sparkle had gone out of French society with Napoleon’s order that the women should be chaste and the men should do something for their livings. The worthy bankers’ wives and other representatives of the bourgeois class that was at last coming into its own with the return of stability were not in the least good company, and more than once some bosom friend of Josephine’s found her in tears because of the frightful dullness of the life she had to lead. It is as necessary to suffer to be Royal as it is to be beautiful.

Plot and counterplot followed each other as quickly as lunge and riposte in fencing. The Bonaparte family thirsted for Napoleon to assume a Royal title. By them, Lucien was commissioned to make the first attempt to force Napoleon’s hand, for

none of them had as yet learned that it was the most difficult matter in the world to divert Napoleon from any course of action that he had marked out for himself. Lucien worked diligently in various directions. He spread rumours through the various political circles, and these did not particularly displease their subject, for he was not at all averse to a little preparation of the public mind. He was well aware of what was going on, for his minister of police was Fouché, and Fouché was efficient, whatever faults he possessed. But besides, Fouché was an old friend of Josephine's, for he had known her in the days when he was scheming for power under the Directory, and she was the brightest star at Barras's receptions. It was only natural that he and Josephine should become allies.

Josephine disliked the idea of Napoleon assuming hereditary power, mainly because it at once raised the question of an heir, although, with more perspicacity than the majority, she foresaw that it could not last, and she would rather have a permanent place in the Court of the Bourbons, whom she rather liked, than to have hanging over her the dread possibility of a fall from power and the probable trip to the guillotine that would ensue. Thus she found herself in opposition to Lucien, with Fouché as her ally.

Lucien now rushed into print as the author of an anonymous pamphlet advocating Napoleon's assumption of the hereditary power. It was perfectly true that Napoleon connived at its publication, as a straw to test the wind of public opinion, but when Fouché reported that it had caused a good deal of shock in

many circles this unofficial recognition did not save Lucien. Fouché, thanks to Josephine, knew very well indeed who was the author, but he pretended ignorance, and both for reasons of his own and to oblige her clamoured for the arrest and punishment of the offender. Josephine supported him.

Napoleon had to make some concession to public opinion, and although the disgrace of Lucien would be officially secret, he could rely upon Fouché to make the world privately acquainted with the facts as far as the double dupe knew them. Consequently Lucien was removed from office, and packed off out of Paris on the embassy to Madrid. Josephine rejoiced. After that, the inevitable pendulum-swing of public opinion resulted in the offer by the Senate to Napoleon of the Consulate for Life with the power to name his successor. Everybody, in fact, could consider themselves successful in their intrigues, but nobody did. Josephine was worried by Napoleon's having to find himself a successor; Fouché doubted her good faith; and the Bonapartes were enraged by her apparent victory.

But before the Consulate for Life became an accomplished fact, there occurred an incident which well displayed the perils of greatness. On Christmas Eve, 1800, Napoleon was driving to the Opera with some of the chief functionaries of the Consulate, and Josephine, her ladies, and an aide-de-camp were to follow in another carriage. Napoleon's coachman was drunk and drove too fast; Josephine delayed for a short time to adjust the fit of one of her prized Cashmere shawls.

A cart filled with explosives and scrap-iron had

been placed, by Royalist conspirators, at the corner of the Rue Nicaise, and it was timed to explode as the First Consul drove by. But by the coincidence of these two fortunate accidents the infernal machine blew up after Napoleon had passed by and before Josephine's carriage was near enough to be damaged. The force of the explosion broke the glass in both carriages, cutting the hand of Hortense, who was with Josephine, and in the street eight people were killed and twenty-eight wounded.

Napoleon apparently did not mind at all. He walked briskly into the Opera with the casual remark that someone had tried to blow him up, and then, sitting down, ordered the performance to proceed. Josephine, according to eye-witnesses, was more shaken, but she sat through the performance.

The attempt was actually of advantage to Napoleon, for it enabled him to get rid of all those whom he distrusted by the simple means of accusing them of being parties to the plot and packing them off to Cayenne and other salubrious neighbourhoods. But it was most inconvenient for Josephine, for once more it called attention to the fact that Napoleon was without a direct heir and reopened the whole question of the succession.

Josephine was now thirty-four, and, seeing that most probably she had reached maturity in her early tropical environment at twelve, she had little hope of ever bearing Napoleon a son. The doctors were cautious but noncommittal. They recommended a course of the waters at Plombières, and thither went Josephine to spend the summer of 1801, tortured by fears of divorce, by the hatred of her husband's

family, and now with the fear of assassination thrown in.

At Plombières she had leisure enough to consider her position more fully, and to lay plans for its consolidation. Perhaps her horrible old aunt had something to do with it, for the scheme that was evolved seems very like her handiwork.

Put briefly, the plan consisted of the marriage of her daughter Hortense to one of the Bonaparte brothers. Hortense was now eighteen, and the choice before her lay between Lucien Bonaparte and the fourth brother, Louis, for Joseph was married and the next, Jerome, was younger than she was.

The whole plan reads curiously like that whereby, at the instance of her aunt, Josephine was handed over to Alexandre Beauharnais in order to link the Beauharnais with the Taschers. Any one of M. Tascher's daughters would have suited Mme. Renaudin's plans; any one of the Bonaparte sons would suit Josephine's. Hortense herself hardly knew her own mind, much like Josephine in those far-off days. If she wanted to marry anybody in particular, it was Duroc, Napoleon's confidential official and later Grand Marshal of the Palace and Duke of Friuli. But there was not very much of importance in the affair, and Duroc himself did not display any overwhelming enthusiasm. Hortense allowed herself to be influenced by her mother's wishes, and thereby committed herself to a lifetime of married unhappiness nearly as intense as her mother's.

In enterprises of this sort it is always advisable first to ensure the agreement of the man in question.

Lucien Bonaparte in his memoirs declares that Josephine approached him in the first place, and such a thing is not unlikely, seeing that Lucien was even now, after his disgrace, the most eminent of Napoleon's brothers, while he was decidedly the most rabid of Josephine's enemies. If he were to wed Hortense, Josephine would ensure a good future materially for her daughter, and at the same time would bring him over to her side.

But Lucien fought shy of the proffered honour. He was fast in the clutches of a mercenary and clever widow, Mme. Joubberthou, whom he was later to wed after she had borne him a child. And to his mind there was more risk than possibility of glory in marrying the daughter of a woman who might be divorced at any moment. It must have been very much to Josephine's satisfaction that his later marriage involved him in utter and absolute ruin as far as the Empire of the French was concerned, for Napoleon discovered it when he was on the eve of arranging a marriage for him with the widowed Queen of Etruria and Lucien spent the rest of his life in exile.

Lucien being unwilling, the next possibility was Louis. Louis was a dreamy, helpless nincompoop, at present always involved in some affair or other with a woman of low degree, and later to develop into a confirmed hypochondriac full of good intentions with complete incapacity for carrying them into practice. So dreamy was he, indeed, that he did not mind very much whom he was married to as long as she did not propose to interfere with his philosophical speculations and the comfortable unreality of outside world. Hortense seemed modest and unassuming and

obedient, and if by any chance ambition called to him in his various moods then ambition seemed likely to be satisfied by the opportunities that would be open to the man who was stepson-in-law as well as brother to the greatest man in France. For the Bonapartes were nearly as jealous of each other as they were of Josephine, and marriage with Hortense would advance Louis in Napoleon's favour to the detriment of less hardy souls.

And so, beguiled by the wiles of Josephine, who exerted all her practised charms upon him, gently coerced by his terrible brother, who had been won over to the scheme partly because of his fondness for Hortense and partly by Josephine's diplomatic urgings, Louis drifted into this marriage with far less thought than he devoted to the cutting of the pages of a book.

At the last moment his charming brother Lucien made a suggestion that was to poison all Louis's thoughts at a later period. Lucien hinted that Napoleon had a distinct interest in marrying off Hortense. He suggested that perhaps only a marriage would cover up a scandal for which Napoleon himself was responsible. This idle rumour was very generally believed during the Empire, and has even received some recognition of late years. There was not the least truth in it. Josephine would not have tolerated such a thing for a moment, and in this case she could, and would, have raised a terrible scandal had the story had any foundation in fact. Not only that, but in all Napoleon's correspondence we can find no hint that there were any such relations between himself and Hortense, while we find him

going to the utmost pains to kill the rumour as soon as it reached his ears, although later, when the search for an heir became agonizing in its intensity, we find him referring to the rumours in terms of satisfaction because the French people would be the more ready to accept Hortense's eldest son as their ruler.

It is possible to condemn Josephine on the spot for her part in this transaction. The marriage was bound to be unhappy, and Josephine sacrificed her daughter merely to strengthen her own position. But it would be well to be more cautious. The likelihood of the failure of the marriage was not so obvious. It is a rash prophet who predicts the result of *any* marriage. It was at any rate customary for parents to marry off their daughters with less consultation even than Hortense was granted. And as a last line in the defence, it could be said that Hortense was likely to be far unhappier if Napoleon divorced Josephine than ever Louis would make her. Josephine may have already known how unhappy a queen could be, but even that would not deter the average mother from giving her daughter as good a chance as possible of herself becoming a queen.

During all this time Napoleon had been working steadily towards that control of the Executive and unquestioned power which for the moment was his only goal. In the winter of 1800 Moreau had gained the victory of Hohenlinden and completed the work begun by Masséna at Zurich and continued by Bonaparte at Marengo. Peace followed with Austria, and even England, the most determined and dangerous enemy of the Republic, was beginning to show signs of a desire for peace. And peace was what

France wanted above everything else. It was even what Napoleon wanted. Napoleon's discreet resection of the powers of the Tribune had resulted in much of the power falling into the hands of the Senate, who were entirely subservient to his wishes. Tactful pressure by Napoleon, combined with a genuine desire to repay him for his services to France, and the obvious need to give the world proof of the stability of his position during the coming negotiations, resulted in the offer by the Senate to Napoleon of the Consulate for Life with the power to name his successor. By this step Napoleon ceased to be Citoyen Bonaparte, and became Napoleon, First Consul. Josephine's position was not so clearly defined. She had no place in the constitution, but except in name she was as much before the women of France as was Napoleon before the men.

Peace came to France, such a peace as the statesmen of the preceding century had only dreamed about, leaving France the unquestioned first place on the Continent, and bringing with it a semi-official recognition by England of Napoleon's title. Austria was crushed, Italy was a subject territory, Germany was largely in a state of vassalage, Spain was a humble suitor for French favour. But what brought most joy to Josephine's heart during this wonderful year was the birth of a child to Louis and Hortense. That child, Napoleon Charles, was the heir after the present generation of the Bonaparte name, for Joseph had only daughters and Lucien at present was unmarried. It was unthinkable that Napoleon would ever divorce Josephine. The comfort of the thought almost more than balanced in Josephine's eyes the unpleasant

necessity of having to own herself a grandmother. Knowing the truth herself, she did not object in the least to the circulation of rumours to the effect that Napoleon himself was the father of the child. If she could not be the mother of an Emperor, it was the next best thing to be the grandmother of one—especially if grandmotherhood implied permanence of tenure.

Empire was theirs now in all save the name—which to most people means more than any other perquisite of royalty. The couple made a semi-royal tour of the provinces, visiting Normandy and the Belgian provinces, and being received with wild rapture everywhere; they lived in semi-state at St. Cloud and elsewhere; they corresponded with Kings on terms of semi-equality; in fact, everything that the word “semi” implies of transition indicated that this was only a half-way house towards the seizing of the sceptre and the crown and all the other expensive but strangely attractive paraphernalia of kingship.

In one or two directions Napoleon's arrangements were especially pleasing to Josephine. The Concordat was concluded with the Pope. Religion meant little to her, as was hardly surprising after thirty years in an atmosphere of complete irreligion, but somewhere within Josephine there ran a curious little vein of snobbishness and of respect for the mighty. It was this which was responsible for her espousal of the Bourbon cause, and also it was the reason of her welcoming of the Concordat.

Another very satisfactory incident was the arrest of Cadoudal and his confederates when they were on

the point of attempting another coup like that of the Rue Nivose. Cadoudal died on the scaffold; some of his accomplices were condemned with him; and of these some were pardoned. Public opinion attributed their pardon to Josephine, and doubtless Josephine pleaded for their lives, but if the public believed that anything Josephine said to her husband on high affairs of state such as this had any weight with him the public were sadly mistaken.

Cadoudal's death meant far more than the removal of a single conspirator. He was the arch conspirator, it is true, a man of unquenchable energy and deep devotion to the Bourbon cause, but more than that the French police, by stretching a point or two, were able through information gained by the arrests to implicate Napoleon's greatest military rival, Moreau, the victor of Hohenlinden and the hero of that marvellous retreat through the Black Forest which had saved for France an army and perhaps her existence. Once the dictator of France found a lever, however frail, against this man nothing could save him. Moreau was condemned to imprisonment, but, by the clemency of Napoleon, who much preferred him to be safely out of the country than a centre of conspiracy in a dungeon in France, he was allowed to retire into permanent exile in America.

Royalists and republicans were alike reduced by now to impotence, but still Napoleon had not shown himself yet as the complete Emperor, the man against whom no party could even think evil without danger. Austerlitz was yet to be fought; the splendours of the coronation had not yet dazzled the

Parisians into blind worship ; the Code Napoleon was as yet too incomplete and unknown for the benefits it conferred to be rated as chief among the blessings of autocratic government. Napoleon had to do something to set himself above the run of common men. He had one or two mysterious conferences with Fouché and Savary, the man who would kill his own father if Napoleon ordered him to do so, and soon Josephine heard to her horror that in defiance of all laws, statutory, international, and moral, a young prince of the house of Bourbon had been arrested by a raiding party sent across the frontier into the territory of Baden and was at present in the fortress of Vincennes awaiting the death which was so surely planned for him.

It had been a prime necessity for Napoleon to attract the attention of Europe and of France, to fix the minds of everyone upon his personality and whims as the pivot of Continental arrangements. Forty years later his nephew had this done for him by the blunders of the Orleans Government, which demanded under threat of war his expulsion from Switzerland, but for the first Napoleon matters did not arrange themselves so easily. What would most impress the crowned heads of Europe would be the execution of one of their own caste ; what would interest the French people more than any treaty or code of law would be a well-planned murder with plenty of trimmings of a melodramatic kind. Impudence and audacity towards the rest of Europe appealed to them as much as a successful campaign, and for the moment there was no chance of the latter. So d'Enghien was to be shot, for ostensible reasons

rather like those which caused the small boy to squash the toad—just to “learn him to be a Bourbon,” more or less.

Josephine, to her credit, disapproved of the scheme entirely. She was no stranger to sudden death. Those awful weeks in the prison of Les Carmes had set her once and for all on the side of the condemned. She appealed desperately for mercy on the wretched prince. Then, besides, she still had a romantic attachment for the Bourbons, despite the fact that their cause was in direct opposition to her own, and to shoot one seemed rather like blasphemy to her. Above all, the men she most distrusted, Murat, Savary, and Fouché, were involved. That in itself was a good reason for being on the opposite side. But most of all Josephine was being merciful. Later she did not obtain mercy when she most needed it. Napoleon brushed aside her remonstrances, retreated, man-like, when she shed tears, and sent strict orders to Murat, who had to nominate the court martial, that the trial was to be held at once, and the body of the accused buried within the confines of the prison. His orders were carried out.

Not very long afterwards the Senate waited upon the Consul and his wife and offered them the position of Emperor and Empress of the French.

CHAPTER IX

THE CORONATION

THE careful articles of the *Senatus-Consultum* constituting the Empire made small allowance for the Empress in matters political save for the arrangements made for the event of the death of her husband after she had presented him with an heir and before that heir came of age. Except for this chance of the Regency the Empress was nobody in the eyes of the constitution. But Napoleon gave her immense position in matters of etiquette. She bore the same arms as his own without difference, as far as a woman was able to do so by the laws of heraldry. Eight horses drew her carriage of state, as many as the Emperor's and more than anyone else was allowed. Her permanent guard was a battalion of infantry and a squadron of cavalry; a picket of at least eighteen men was to escort her carriage whenever she drove about.

To tell the honest truth, it must have been rather a strain for Josephine to go anywhere after she became Empress, for in every town through which she passed the garrison had to turn out and parade upon the glacis, the bells had to ring, salutes had to be fired, the Prefect and the Sub-prefect and the Mayor had to meet her, and the clergy of every church

he passed had to stand in the church porch in full vestments. Not even Tessa and Gianetta when they sang of the delights of being a "right down, regular royal queen" visualized such splendour as this.

Honours and distinctions were in fact flying thick and fast. Eighteen of the greatest soldiers of France became Marshals. Joseph and Louis Bonaparte, Talleyrand, Murat, Cambacères, and a dozen others became Grand Imperial Dignitaries with not much to do and one-third of a million francs apiece per annum for doing it. Napoleon's brothers, and, soon afterwards, his sisters and his brothers-in-law became Imperial Highnesses. The very butlers were promoted to the rank of Chamberlains, with uniforms of red silk laced with silver, or a green coat laced with gold, with scarlet vest and breeches and white silk stockings.

Paris went mad with the excitement. Nobody cared that war was being once more waged with England, and that two hundred thousand men were massed on the Channel coast in preparation for an invasion. The pleasure of having royalty once more in their midst overbalanced this unhappy fact, at least in the eyes of Parisian shopkeepers thinking thriftily of the golden harvest they would reap. Fêtes were the order of the day. The Marshals entertained Josephine; the Grand Imperial Dignitaries did so too; so did the Senate. The brilliance and glitter were at least impressive; perhaps all the more when one came to consider that all these Grand Constables and Arch Chancellors and Marshals of the Empire and Grand Eagles of the Legion of Honour had not so very long ago been stable boys and smugglers

and pettifogging lawyers and unsuccessful farmers. And the Empress from whose presence they had to retire backwards, and who was so great that only the very greatest among them was allowed even a stool to sit on while in her presence, had nine years before been the dependent of the unspeakable Barras, and had been the mistress, before she became the wife, of a petty artillery officer who now ruled all this glittering horde.

Whispers soon began to circulate that the approaching coronation would be distinguished above all other coronations in history. His Holiness the Pope occupied at that time a curious position with regard to the man who wielded the sceptre which had once rested in the hands of the Eldest Son of the Church. Some of the Papal dominions were in the occupation of the French; for a time, indeed, Rome itself had been a republic dependent upon France; during the Italian campaigns before Napoleon gained supreme power the Pope had had an anxious time buying him off; and no one could guess whether or no Napoleon might not at any time make further demands on him.

But at present there was peace between the two. If the Concordat had strengthened Napoleon's position, it had also strengthened the Pope's. If Pius were to anoint and crown Napoleon he might well expect Napoleon's help later, for the Emperor would hardly (so the Papal diplomats fondly hoped) try to lessen the position of him who, by virtue of his position, confirmed him in his own. So the diplomats thought, and in the end Pius agreed to crown Napoleon, even as his predecessor had crowned

Charlemagne. They did not foresee the annexation of all the States of the Church, the proclamation of Napoleon's son as King of Rome, and the incarceration of Pius in the grim prison of Savona.

Charlemagne had had to go to Rome for his inunction. As a last concession Napoleon wrung from Pius his agreement to the plan of holding the coronation in Paris, and at long last Pius set out on the journey. Never before had a Pope shown so much condescension; and never since has it occurred, either. It seems safe enough to say that it will never happen in the future, as well.

There were no precedents for the reception of a Pope in Paris, but forms and ceremonies were improvised in sufficient numbers to make the occasion a solemn one. The Master of the Ceremonies, the Grand Marshal of the Palace, and the Grand Chamberlain began haggling with the Cardinals over the unsettled details of the approaching coronation—who was to arrive first at Notre Dame, what was to be the formula employed, and so on. The Pope gave way on every point. When a request for precedence is backed by a veiled threat of the annexation of a population of over a million souls it is likely to be granted.

But the Pope and the Emperor were not the only ones to be weighing and considering formalities. In Josephine's busy brain schemes were being evolved as well. It was a triumph, even if unsought, that she was to be crowned along with Napoleon, and was to share equally with him all the splendours of the day. But splendour which did not ensure permanence was of no use to her—in fact it was likely to

bore her as much as anything else. Security was what she sought more urgently than splendour. At present the only legal link between her and her husband was the frail tie of a civil marriage. Napoleon was head of the state as much in fact as in theory. A word from him and the civil contract would be broken. How could she make sure of him? Josephine schemed and planned, and in the end she decided to dare even the wrath of her terrible husband to bind him more closely to her.

Two days before the coronation she confessed to Pius that her marriage to Napoleon had never received the blessing of the Church. It had long been troubling her conscience, she said. It is doubtful if Josephine ever had a conscience, and if she had it certainly had never troubled her on this particular point. Nevertheless Pius was horrified at the news. He told Napoleon that he could not possibly give his official blessing to two people who in the eyes of the Church were living in sin. He asked Napoleon to be married by a priest before the coronation.

Now Napoleon was as horrified as was Pius, but in a different way and for different reasons. A wolf would not be more surprised if a lamb were to charge him open-mouthed than was Napoleon at this amazing exhibition of independence and enterprise on the part of Josephine. He had grown accustomed already to thinking of his wife as a dutiful woman with the sole desire of pleasing him and doing as he wished. And the German idea of a woman's sphere being strictly limited to *kuche*, *kirche*, and *kinder*, appealed to him very much. He was not at all pleased to find Josephine rushing into the world of the very highest

politics without consulting him. But this point of view was not as important as another. The idea of divorce was constantly present in his mind even although he had refused to follow his family's wishes in the matter. It was a reserve line of action that might be very useful in the future, and Napoleon had gained thirty victories already by the economic use of his reserves. He was not the man to waste anything of this sort. Added to this was the galling knowledge that he had been outwitted by the woman he chose to consider (and would rather have) a mere simpleton. Napoleon did his best to induce Pius to waive his objections.

Here he met with total failure. Pius was pliable enough where his conscience was not concerned, but, very much to his credit, he was adamant in matters of religion. He adhered to his decision, and went so far as to say that he would not crown Napoleon if he refused to be married. Chance had established Pius in an impregnable position, and Napoleon had to admit defeat. If he had taken the Pope at his word and had dispensed with his assistance at the coronation all Paris would have laughed at him. The laughter of Paris was much more dangerous than its hatred. "From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step," said Napoleon, and nothing could be more ridiculous than a fiasco like the one imminent. He could only give way.

Very early next morning in the strictest secrecy an altar was erected in a little room in the Tuileries, and thither came Cardinal Fesch, the newly appointed Grand Almoner and Napoleon's great-uncle. Thither, too, came Napoleon, irritated

almost past bearing at this unexpected occurrence. Berthier, the one man on earth whom Napoleon trusted, was present as a witness, and lastly came Josephine, tears in her eyes on account of the rage to which Napoleon had given way the night before, but triumph in her heart, and, for the first time for years, a feeling of security there too. Pius may have been acting as an honourable Christian in bringing about such a state of affairs, but surely never was there such a mockery of one of the solemnest services of the Church. Fesch was a Christian much more from policy than from conviction; Napoleon was no more a Christian than he was a Mohammedan or a Jew, and further he was raging internally at the whole affair and was already scheming how to nullify it; Josephine was a little pagan to whom the occasion was a convenient formality; and to both of them the breaking of the vows they were making was a commonplace only regulated by interest.

Two days later, at ten in the morning, the happy pair set out from the Tuileries to Notre Dame, whither Pius had preceded them. The saluting guns roared out as they started, just as they had for Pius, and they continued to roar at intervals all day long. The procession was very long. Murat came first, by virtue of his office of Governor of Paris, dressed in the uniform of a general of cavalry. He had to contrive a rapid change of costume on his arrival at the Cathedral, for there he was to appear as Grand Admiral of France, the eighth of the Grand Dignitaries. Behind Murat came the horsemen, who were later to spill their blood on ten years of battlefields, but at present glittering in all the pageantry

that only military ceremonial can display. There was a regiment of Cuirassiers, on their big Belgian horses, their splendid horse-hair plumes tossing on the crests of their polished helmets—the most majestic helmets that have ever been designed by any Army Clothing Department. The breastplates and sabres shone like silver in the hard December sunlight. Next came the Carbineers, the heavy cavalry of the Guard, with gleaming white cloaks and black horses. After these came the most famous regiment of all the two hundred that stood on the French army rolls—the Chasseurs of the Guard, in the familiar green and red that was already historic. Fifteen hundred cavalry in all—half a mile of men and horses.

There followed eleven six-horse carriages for Grand Dignitaries, Princes, and Ministers, with a coachman, a postillion, and three footmen to each, and after a decent interval came the Imperial carriage, with eight horses, a coachman, postillion, eight men on foot, and thirteen pages. No one in the waiting crowd behind the lines of infantry knew yet that the great gilt crown on the roof had fallen off just as the carriage had been about to start, and had had to be hurriedly readjusted, and neither did anyone know that under the rouge plastered on the cheeks of the Empress were the marks of tears, tears called forth by the raging of her husband over a Sacrament of the Church. In the carriage were Napoleon and Josephine, with opposite them Joseph and Louis, the only two of the Bonaparte brothers not in disgrace. Josephine looked exquisitely beautiful, at least at the distance at which the vulgar herd is kept, and no one would have dreamed that in reality she was suffering

agonies from the December cold through wearing a low-cut gown without a cloak.

Following the Imperial carriage came thirteen more six-horse carriages with more Grand Dignitaries and Princesses, and after them came another fifteen hundred mounted troops, the Horse Grenadiers of the Guard, the Gendarmerie of the Guard, and five hundred picked artillerymen. The Navy was not so well represented.

By the Pont du Cité the procession halted, and while the Grand Dignitaries moved into their allotted places the Emperor and Empress entered a tent pitched outside the Archiepiscopal Palace and there changed into the ceremonial garments of the occasion. It took an hour or more, and the poor Pope had already been waiting for them since before the procession started.

At last they entered the Cathedral, Napoleon in his toga-like robes, Josephine in an amply cut gown of silver brocade, the shoulders of which were covered with diamonds, while everywhere it was embroidered in gold with bees and eagles and thunderbolts. The train, which hung from the waist, was seven yards long and was made of red velvet embroidered with gold. Twenty feet of velvet crusted with gold weighs as much as any woman can carry, and the five Princesses deputed to "support the mantle" did their duty very ineffectively, so that Josephine tottered as she went up the aisle.

There was gold on her white shoes, gold on her white gloves, she had even gold clocks on her white stockings. She wore diamond bracelets and diamond earrings and a diamond necklace and a diamond fillet

in her hair. Altogether what she carried on her person probably represented the annual revenue of two or three provinces—or the whole cost of the campaign of Marengo.

The ceremony is perhaps too well known to bear another description in detail. But it is amusing to record how Napoleon had to wink to keep the holy oil out of his eyes—there was no arrangement in the Rubric for him to wipe it off with his pocket handkerchief—and how he tugged the crown out of the Pope's hands to place it himself on his own head, and then turned to Josephine and crowned her as well.

All things considered, everything went off very well. Something like two millions sterling had been spent; nobody concerned had anything to eat until after eight o'clock that night; Josephine lost the position conferred upon her in less than five years, and Napoleon lost his in less than nine. Lannes, for all the splendour of his present Colonel-General's uniform, was to die of gangrene four years hence, and Bessières was to have his breast torn open by a cannon shot. Murat, who bore Josephine's crown on a cushion, and whose Gascon swagger was noticeable even when he was engaged upon such serious business, was to die at the hands of half a dozen unwashed Neapolitan police, against a wall in a little Calabrian town of which so far he had never heard. Pius, who prayed so solemnly that the most high and most august Emperor he was crowning would reign for ever, was soon to excommunicate that same Emperor, and was to suffer at the hands of his minions indignities innumerable. The soldiers who filled the

streets were to perish of hunger, exposure, typhoid, dysentery, plague, while the citizens who cheered with them were to see Cossacks camped in their boulevards and the British infantry paraded upon the Place de l'Etoile.

CHAPTER X

JOSEPHINE'S COURT

WHEN Napoleon began to arrange his Court he was very largely guided by the precedents of the Courts of the Bourbons, especially that of Louis XIV, who had reduced all the customs grown up during centuries into a system absolutely complete and adapted to every contingency. Louis was King of France for seventy years or more, and etiquette was his hobby, so that the finish and completeness of his system is not to be wondered at. His ceremonial was largely copied by the other courts of Europe, heightening the similarity due to similar original needs.

Thus Napoleon had only to revive Louis's ceremonial in its entirety to have a Court adapted to every purpose and sufficiently like that of rival sovereigns to make them realize that he was one of them. This he very largely did, but in certain matters he stopped short, and in certain others he was unable to copy his sun-like predecessor.

Louis, for instance, was so convinced of his kingship, and was so successful in making other people believe in it in the way he did that he found no difficulty in being a king first, last, and all the time. He was a king while he pulled on his breeches just as

much as while he sat at the head of the council table or while he received Embassies. Consequently there was as much ritual about the one as about the others. Certain Court officials had to be present on each occasion, and, thanks to the general belief that it was an honour to be allowed to assist the King in his toilet, these officials were men of birth and position. Montaigne, who lived during the reign of Louis XIV's grandfather, before matters reached such a pitch, speaks in one of his essays of the menial duties which were demanded by, and willingly granted to, various oriental potentates mentioned in his favourite authorities, from members of his Court. He did not know that a hundred years later such services would be performed for the King of France by the proudest of the French nobility. Perhaps not quite to the extent mentioned by Montaigne, but nearly so.

The result was that the King was always surrounded by courtiers and enjoyed as much privacy during his lifetime as the proverbial goldfish. To the Bourbons such a state of affairs was not only natural but desirable. A king can be a king much more easily to a duke with a hundred and thirty-two quarterings than he can be to a base-born lackey who is so far below them both that subtle distinctions of rank are wasted on him.

To Napoleon this arrangement was, on the contrary, unnatural and undesirable, and was also impossible to contrive. A few of the old nobility might condescend to accept highly-paid places from him, but they would not give in exchange the genuine and amazing adoration that was the natural



METTERNICH

FROM AN ENGRAVING AFTER THE PAINTING BY LAWRENCE
(BRITISH MUSEUM)

perquisite of the *Soleil Monarque*. The new nobility was still sufficiently imbued with republicanism and the idea of equality to shrink from "personal service." Napoleon himself was too logical-minded not to prefer having his shirt handed to him by a man to whom such an action was part of his profession to having it done by a man whose main qualification was the possession of ancestors or an obliging mother. Besides, Napoleon had not been Emperor long enough to dislike occasional privacy.

These conditions determined the most obvious cleavage between the new conditions and the old. The life of the Emperor and of the Empress was sharply divided into public and private. In the *Appartement d'Honneur* etiquette reigned supreme, and business was conducted (as far as business can be conducted in such a fashion) with the pomp and ceremony necessary to Royalty. But in the *Appartement Intérieur* matters were different. If a visitor was admitted there, he or she was received much as anyone would receive a visitor; the *entrée* was reserved for only a very few persons, so that the royal couple could dress or could meet as man and wife in comparative privacy. Valets and maids were thus more necessary to Napoleon and Josephine than were Lords-in-Waiting, and in logical sequence it followed that Josephine was more influenced by such people than by duchesses.

Another result was that all the arrangements of the various palaces involved the same architectural separation. If Josephine happened to stay anywhere where such had not already been carried out, then it had to be improvised. Even in the palaces of

monarchs she was visiting, at Stuttgart, for instance, her Chamberlains, by the order of the Emperor, insisted on a suite being allotted to her which permitted of such a division.

This settled, then the rest of the arrangements were prescribed by formula, mainly Bourbon formula. Four consecutive rooms were necessary to the *Appartement d'Honneur*. In each, and at the door of each, certain officials had their station, and various grades of the nobility had the right of penetrating various distances within.

The Cerberus of the antechamber was a highly resplendent porter, in green and gold, a sword at his side and a halberd in his hand, under whose orders were four valets de chambre and four huissiers also in green and gold and wearing swords. Then came four upper footmen, men of fine stature, in green with a red silk sash, and bearing long staves ornamented with gold tassels. Most junior of all were twenty-six under-footmen with hardly any gold on their coats, but with red silk waistcoats instead.

Their duties were various, and some of them were useful. They did the work of the *Appartement d'Honneur*, attending to the fires and sweeping, and during visiting hours they were always ready, should a crowned head or an Imperial Princess arrive, to roll out the red carpet and stand in a double rank while the great one entered or departed. For Grand Dignitaries the carpet did not appear; the footmen merely formed up while the head porter beat upon the ground with the butt of his halberd by way of announcement. For lesser folk, below the rank of a

Marshal or a Bishop, the footmen did not condescend even to appear.

Passing through the antechamber, the first salon was reached. It was here that the Empress interviewed persons of too low a degree to be admitted farther. The only guardians were the two pages on duty. Very splendid thirteen-year-olds were these, in green coats and scarlet vests and breeches nearly covered with gold lace, a tricorne hat with an ostrich feather or egret, and an epaulette bearing the Imperial bee and eagle. They were Josephine's particular servants, and were carefully trained for their duties at a special school. They passed the Empress her plate at dinner, and filled her glass; when she went out to her carriage one of them walked backwards before her while the other held up her train; if one of them were sent on a message for the Empress he had by rule to ride at a gallop, and to impede him was treason. On their growing too old to fill their part in a sufficiently juvenile manner, a commission in the army awaited them.

This Premier Salon was not used a great deal. Most of the Court life was passed in the next room, the Salon de Service. To this most of the officials of station had the right of entrée, but the door was guarded by an usher in the usual green and gold. Within, two people were always to be found. One was the Chamberlain, in scarlet coat and white breeches, silver lace on his coat seams and a silver-hilted sword, with his Chamberlain's key (with the inevitable Eagle) on his lapel. The other was the Equerry, who wore sky blue. The Chamberlain did the business of the salon, the Equerry occupying

much the same position here as did the pages in the other room. But in the absence of the Empress the Lady-in-Waiting was in chief command.

Into this room could come, as a right, any representative of the Emperor, such as an aide-de-camp; the Lady-in-Waiting and the Lady of the Bedchamber (who, indeed, were bound by their duty to look after the Empress and see that she was never alone with a man, and who also were expected, although in this they failed, to see that she did not order too much on credit); the Ladies of the Palace, Equerries, Chamberlains, and Gentlemen-in-Waiting; Imperial Princes and Princesses; the Grand Dignitaries of the Empire (but not their wives); and the wives of the Officers of the Empire, Ministers of State, Governor-Generals and suchlike, but not their husbands. Why the Arch-Chancellor should be admitted but not his wife, or the wife of the Governor-General of the Departments beyond the Alps but not her husband has never been explained. This strange point of etiquette may have had its origin in a tactful arrangement to exclude, not too obviously, some particular individual, or on the other hand Napoleon may have merely made the arrangement to give some sort of local colour to his brand-new Court methods, for a quaint distinction like that certainly savours of antique fashions.

Beyond the Salon de Service lay the Holy of Holies—the Salon de l'Impératrice. The right of admission here was far more strictly limited. The magic portal could only be crossed without invitation by the Emperor in person, Imperial Princesses, and the Lady-in-Waiting and the Lady of the

Bedchamber. The functions of the two latter obviously had their origin in the need to ensure that the Blood Royal should never be contaminated by any of base degree, and although the rule was strictly observed during Josephine's time, it was followed with far more exactitude later, when Marie Louise became Empress.

Minor details of Court etiquette were much the same as in Courts all the world over. Armchairs in the royal presence were solely for the Emperor and Empress, and the only two people for whom exceptions were ever made were Napoleon's mother and, much later, the Czar of Russia. Kings, Queens, Imperial Princes and Princesses, and, very occasionally, sovereign Princes of rank less than kingly, were allowed chairs with backs, while minor sovereigns and the others of the Blood Royal had to be content with stools—the historic *tabourets*. Everyone else had to stand. Varicose veins and broken-down foot-arches are a small price to pay for the privilege of attending upon Royalty.

Wherever Josephine went, whether she was at the Tuileries or St. Cloud, Malmaison or Laeken, or even at some Hôtel de Ville hurriedly fitted up for her reception, she was bound to find all these arrangements in working order. In one room would be a man in a blue coat, in another a man in a green coat. Did she desire to set foot outside the door, then thirty-nine men rushed to unroll a red carpet before her. A friend of hers of no official position, if invited to visit her, must show her credentials first to an officer of the guard, then to a porter, then to a page, then to a Chamberlain who finally came

scratching on the door to find out what were her orders in the matter. It was the life of the gilded cage—a highly gilded cage, for all her apartments were furnished in the best (or worst) Empire style. Stone walls may not make a prison, but Josephine found that goldleaf can be more effective.

A certain amount of tradition and etiquette also attached itself to the *Appartement Intérieur*, although here a little more latitude was allowed, or was forced upon the Imperial officials by circumstances, for which Josephine was no doubt grateful. Entrance was gained from the *Appartement d'Honneur* through a door into a sitting-room, from which one could pass through two or three other sitting-rooms to the bedroom, dressing-room, and bathroom. In the furnishing of these Josephine had a freer hand, but even here officialdom hampered her, and as she was never able, in consequence of her duties, to stay long enough in one place to see her orders carried out, she frequently found on her return that some Court architect or palace official on his own responsibility had countermanded the whole scheme. But whether the design was Josephine's or another's, the influence of the Empire style hung heavy over everything, with here and there incredible lapses of taste from the fashions of Louis Seize, and ominous warnings of what would befall in the matter of furniture and decoration in the next generation—in the days of Louis Philippe and Victoria. But Josephine's taste when she could shake herself or her agent free from this blighting influence was delightful, and some of the resources at hand were such as not even the Medicis or Julius II had at their disposal. Napoleon had pillaged Europe

of its treasures of art, and Josephine hung her walls with paintings by Raphael and Coreggio, although no effort on the part of the most absolute ruler in modern history could discover artists worthy of painting the ceilings of the rooms in which these pictures hung.

However, the decoration of these rooms hardly mattered, for outside the *Appartement d'Honneur* Josephine passed most of her waking hours in two rooms only, and there her mind was occupied by much more important things. These two rooms were the dressing-room and the *Salle des Marchands*, where tradespeople were admitted without having to pass through the Imperial reception-rooms.

To attend upon Her Imperial Majesty required the services of a vast number of people, whose selection was a subject of anxious thought and discussion on the part of the Emperor and the Empress. Happily this happened to be a subject on which they were entirely in agreement. Napoleon wanted the household to be composed of people of old family, who had served the Bourbons in like capacity. So numerous had been the places under the old régime that practically every *ci-devant* that Napoleon could win over to his side had been employed at Court, so that it did not seem as if much difficulty would be experienced. Josephine was very desirous of surrounding herself with the same class, because of her attachment to everything connected with the previous era. But not enough of the old aristocrats came forward, and those that did were not of the highest rank. Josephine did manage to secure a Rochefoucauld as Lady-in-waiting, but she was of the junior

branch, herself distantly related to the Beauharnais, and save for her marriage distinctly of the *petit noblesse*. The other women came nearly all in the same category, representatives of younger lines, immeasurably below the Lamballes, Chimays, and Luxembourgs who had served Marie Antoinette. Even these were of better blood than Josephine, and before the Revolution would probably have referred to her as "that woman" or in some equally opprobrious manner. There were not enough even of these substitutes, and Napoleon had to fall back on the choices open to him, and make his selection from the families of men distinguished in his service. It might have been a wiser move to have confined his selection entirely to these, for the two divisions could not possibly blend, and were a fruitful source of subsequent discord.

However, the decision was taken, and a fortnight after the *Senatus-Consultum* establishing the Empire an Imperial Decree announced the formation of the Empress's household. This decree was subsequently amplified and extended by others, and the whole elaborate arrangement was not finally settled for some years.

Most prominent in the household, and setting the tone to everyone came the Lady-in-Waiting, the aforesaid Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, whose acquaintance Josephine had probably made in prison, and who had been one of her chief unofficial ladies-in-waiting from the time of the *coup d'état* of Brumaire. This was more of a disadvantage than otherwise, for she could easily remember the time when she had patronized the little Creole woman

unbearably, and in addition the Duchess had the further unhappy characteristic of being unable to hold her tongue about the dark past, so that people who should only have been filled with respect for the great Empress were instead only struck with wonder that the former friend of Barras could rise so high.

The other gem of Josephine's collection of the old noblesse was her First Almoner. He was, as it happened, her only almoner as well, but the title was effective and so it was not interfered with. His duties were light, because Josephine was not the woman to worry much about the salvation of her soul, and the gentleman in question was hardly likely to go out of his way to save it in spite of her. The salvation of souls was not his *métier*, although he had been a Bishop under the old régime and was a Bishop again under Napoleon. On the contrary, he was suspected of drunkenness and libertinism, and even of less gentlemanly peccadilloes such as poaching and murder. But these did not count in the scale against his recommendations, for he was a Rohan, the only one of his name who had allied himself to the Empire, related by blood to every family of note in Europe, a cognate of the Condés and the Soubises, younger brother of that Cardinal de Rohan who had been Grand Almoner to Marie Antoinette, and who by his amazing gullibility and folly had been one of the main agents in ruining the cause of his mistress during the affair of the diamond necklace. Rohan occupies no place in the history of the Empire. He did not even betray his new master, for he died before the abdication. His one sole claim to distinction lies in

the fact that he was the only one of all his family who deserted the cause of the Bourbons.

The third important person in the household of the Empress was the Lady of the Bedchamber, who was in no way the equal in family of the other two. She was a Beauharnais, a niece of the deceased and unregretted Alexandre, and save for this fact her every quality seemed in turn to make her more unsuitable for any position of responsibility. The skeletons in her family cupboard were innumerable. Her father had divorced her mother, and deserting her, had practically left her to starve in Martinique, but she had contrived to replace him (a full-sized skeleton this) by a negro. Her father had later eloped with a *réligieuse* who had taken the vows of chastity. She herself had for some time lived on Josephine's charity, and after a brief incident when Louis Bonaparte thought himself in love with her she had married one of the lesser lights of the circle of Napoleon-worshippers, Lavallette. Among traitors and moral cowards this particular man shows up in pleasant relief. He was faithful to his wife and to his Emperor, during whose reign he held the directorship of posts, and his memoirs form excellent reading. But his wife, with whom we are more particularly concerned at the moment, lost all her slight claim to good looks immediately after her marriage, through an attack of smallpox. Further, an accident in one of her confinements made prolonged standing uncomfortable for her. Lastly, she was suspected, with some reason, of not being quite right in her head. The only explanation that can be offered as to why she was chosen for the position she

filled is that Josephine gave it to her out of sheer kindness of heart. It is a regrettable but undeniable fact that Josephine in making recommendations for positions, or charity for the matter of that, was influenced not so much by the good qualities of the applicant as by her own personal feelings, which rarely meant the same thing.

Twenty-nine other women received the general title of Ladies of the Palace. They were as mixed a collection as anything the Empire could show, which is saying a good deal. There were representatives of the old nobility, and representatives of the new. One was the wife of a cadet of an old family which held, and had held for centuries, sovereignty under the Holy Roman Empire. Three or four were married to men whose fathers had held places at the Court of Louis XVI, and one was the daughter of the same monarch's valet. Some were the wives of Marshals, some of personal aides-de-camp of the Emperor. One was the wife of a Minister of State. Four of them were Italian, to represent the Piedmontese, Tuscan, and Genoese provinces of the Empire. Their lineage was notable, and worthy to rank even with that of the latest recruits to the motley assembly—a Montmorency and a Turenne. Perhaps the most interesting appointment of all was that of Mme. de Rémusat, blue-stockings, feminist, mistress of a dozen of the most important men of the Empire at some time or another, memoirist, and one of the very few women with whom Napoleon deigned to hold intelligent conversation.

Some time after the establishment of the Empire another post for women was created in the Court.

This was that of "reader." It was a sinecure at first, for, at least until the divorce, Josephine was not interested in reading, but, whether by coincidence or not, the post was usually filled by some woman in whom Napoleon had a passing interest of a kind not specially pleasing to his wife.

Of men there were a fair number in the household. Josephine had a First Equerry, a Gentleman-in-Waiting, a First Chamberlain, a Chamberlain Introducer of Ambassadors, six other Chamberlains, an Equerry in Ordinary and four other Equerries. Altogether over a hundred people owed employment to Josephine's rank as Empress, and the salary list amounted to about fifteen thousand pounds sterling per annum. Add to this the cost of their maintenance, large sums for their elaborate uniforms, and, what probably amounted to as much as all these items put together, the extra allowances made at odd times by the Emperor to pay the debts of his favourites and by way of bribes to the old nobility, and it will be seen that an Empress was an expensive luxury.

CHAPTER XI

MARRIED LIFE

IN some ways Napoleon was a model husband. To begin with, he was rich. That was the first essential in Josephine's eyes. Then he was handsome, undoubtedly, even when corpulence came over him. That was nearly as important, for Josephine had a keen sense of the beautiful in a dreamy way. Next, he was affectionate towards his stepchildren. Besides all this he had a way with him with women when he chose to exert it, he could offer his wife the highest position in the land, he was absent sufficiently long to make his presence desirable, and he was not over-exacting as regards the past. In fact, he was just the husband that Josephine would have chosen for herself, had such a course been open to her, when she became a widow in 1794. That she was not happy with him might therefore be attributed to the not unlikely fact that she did not know what was good for her, if it were not explainable in other ways.

The fact was that all the qualities that should have recommended Napoleon to Josephine were likely at any moment to act in precisely the opposite direction. The position he gave her was actually too high for her liking. Had he, as she pressed him to do,

followed in 1800 the example of Monk and restored the Bourbons in exchange for a dukedom, a marshalate, and the position of Constable of France she would have been happy. As the first lady of the Court she would have had a good position which would not make much call upon her energies if she did not feel inclined to exert herself. She would have been near the Bourbons, for whom she could not help feeling a sneaking regard. The Queen would not have been a serious rival when it came to leading fashion. There would have been (or so she hoped) a revival of the gaiety of the old Court. In other words, Josephine would have had all the fun and none of the responsibility or labour or insecurity. As it was, she was forced to drag out her days in the dullest Court in Europe; she never knew when a revolution or a divorce might not ruin her; and she had to spend a great part of her time doing things which she disliked.

Again, the greatness of her husband's position caused him to desire an heir, and her inability to provide one meant that her position was weak. The mere knowledge of this weakness was sufficient to worry her unbearably, after her experiences of the disadvantages of a weak position under the Terror.

His fondness for his stepchildren involved the jealousy of his own family, and what that implied Josephine learned only too well in the course of the years. His absences meant long intervals of anxiety regarding his safety, and wild jealousy regarding the women who surrounded him. And his good looks and his attractiveness to women were other causes of the same devastating jealousy.

After she became Empress, indeed from 1800 onwards, Josephine was a very different woman from what she had been before. In those days she had neither known how great a man Napoleon was to be, nor had time mellowed her rather wayward and capricious passion for him into the wifely and genuine affection which she now felt. At the same time Napoleon's mad passion for her, half real and half the effect of self-deception, had altered into a casual and almost pitying, almost tolerant, liking. The positions were reversed with a vengeance. In the days of Napoleon's wooing it was Josephine who was condescending when she married him. He really had more to gain by the marriage than she had. His passion was greater, and the material advantages for him were greater. It was hardly to be wondered at that Josephine, when he had been absent a year, and seemed likely to remain so for even longer, should (to express it gently) dally with the idea of unfaithfulness to him. None of her previous training had shown her what the real reward of married life is.

But when Napoleon returned from Egypt, and forgave her so completely, paying her debts to the extent of two hundred thousand pounds, and established her as the first lady in France, she rapidly changed. She was genuinely grateful to him, which was a good start. Then there can be no doubt that the discipline into which she forced herself did her character good. By nature slap-dash and irresponsible, she compelled herself to be punctual and punctilious. It was a lesson to her, and it sobered her. And as the years went on she was certainly growing no younger. Living, too, in

constant association with him must have softened her heart towards him. Propinquity is the mother of affection.

With Napoleon everything tended in the opposite direction. When he had wooed Josephine he knew little of women, and his position was such that he could aspire to very few of them. Now, every woman was at his feet. In Egypt he had begun that habit of unfaithfulness which never became with him more than a habit, but which was sufficient to poison all his relations with his wife. Perhaps, too, he had begun to regret a little his early precipitation, and now felt that had he only waited he might have done better for himself. Working insidiously with all these was the secret and miasmatic influence of the hatred of his mother, his brothers and his sisters for Josephine. Napoleon was very susceptible to atmosphere, and the continued hints and urgings of his family must have affected him to some extent. It is hardly to be wondered at that he lost all his old wild affection for his wife.

The cynic who said that in love there is always one who kisses and one who is content to be kissed might have found a double example in the loves of Napoleon and Josephine.

Napoleon's unfaithfulnesses grew more and more frequent as time went on. In Egypt there had been Marguérite Fourès. In 1800, shortly after the reconciliation, there was Grazzini the singer. She performed before him at the Opera at Milan, during the official rejoicings for Marengo, and he sent for her after the performance, and later brought her back with him to Paris, where he had the bad taste to have

her sing at the festival at Notre Dame where he was accompanied by Josephine. Then came actresses in plenty, a few women of mediocre position whom he established at Court or for whom he later found husbands, and in the end there was the woman who had a large though unconscious part in making up his mind to the divorce—Mme. Walewska.

The whole business was not unnaturally hateful to Josephine. She would not affect ignorance—Napoleon, whatever he professed otherwise, would have despised her if she had—and she was powerless to restrain him. To combat Napoleon's will was a hard task in itself, although it was one which she had previously successfully attempted, but to combat it under the present conditions was impossible. Did Napoleon look twice at a woman, then a hundred people rushed forward to arrange a meeting, in the hope of favour from the Emperor or from his favourite. Rarely did the chosen one prove recalcitrant. Napoleon had too much to offer in money, in places at Court, in well-placed husbands, for them to need much persuasion, to say nothing of Napoleon's undoubted personal charm and the glamour which surrounds a Crowned Head.

Josephine's objections were met by violent recriminations. Napoleon would tolerate no interference. He was above the ordinary moral law in such matters, he said, and the sooner Josephine realized it the better. Josephine's indignation was nothing compared with his at the idea of her being indignant. The constant repetition of these scenes became agony to her. There was always the brooding fear that he might by some chance form a lasting

attachment—and that raised the terrifying spectre of divorce. To the natural jealousy of a wife was added the jealousy of middle age and this other tormenting fear. Small wonder that Josephine occasionally lost her self-control.

To add injury to insult was the fact that many of these infidelities took place under the very roof under which Josephine herself was living. There was a side door at the Tuileries, and it was through here, through a dark corridor guarded by Constant the valet and Roustam the Mameluke that the siren of the moment came. When Josephine found the door of Napoleon's room in this part of the palace locked she knew that the chances were that on the other side Napoleon was breaking the vows so solemnly made to Cardinal Fesch just before the coronation. That in itself was enough to drive any woman frantic, and Josephine would batter at the door and wail and weep in a fashion very disturbing to Napoleon's devotions and calculated to annoy Napoleon, who had a great regard for the dignity of demeanour expected of an Empress, very much indeed. Then she would write to her friends, or would implore Fouché, for information about the movements of the various women whom she suspected.

The Bonaparte family rejoiced at each recurrence of this trouble, openly and unashamedly. Caroline made no scruples about lending Napoleon the shelter of her roof for such indulgences when Josephine's objections grew too keen even for his thick skin. The Bourbons and the Austrians and the Poles all tried to push a woman friendly to their cause into the ever-vacant position of *maitresse en titre*. It

can at least be pleaded on Napoleon's behalf that there were very few men who could have resisted the temptations offered by such a state of affairs. But for Josephine it meant many hours of consuming unhappiness.

There was another cause of unhappiness, too, and that was the one which makes for conjugal dissensions even in the households of those who are not Emperors and Empresses. This was money. Josephine never had the least idea of the value of money, nor of how to arrange her expenditure in accordance with her income. While she was Empress she never had to handle money or to make any payments herself, and this must have encouraged her in her failing. Anything offered her which took her fancy she bought—or at least ordered. The tradespeople of Paris—of the whole Empire, for the matter of that—knew of this trait in her character, and they flocked to the *Salle des Marchands* in droves with every expensive useless novelty their ingenuity could devise. Toys, jewellery, dresses, combs, shawls, had only to be shown to the Empress to be instantly bought, without the formality of inquiring the price. The bill came in later, and was passed to the Lady of the Bedchamber for settlement. The Lady of the Bedchamber was that *Mme. de Lavallette* already noticed, and she was hardly likely to scrutinize the account. It was useless for anyone to raise any question about the matter. Neither Josephine nor *Mme. de Lavallette* would have the least recollection of the transaction, while the object bought, three months ago, or so, had been given away most probably as carelessly as it had been ordered. Most of what

Josephine bought, in fact, she gave away. Had she not done so, in a year or two the Tuileries would have more closely resembled a universal store than anything else. But her generosity was as careless as her spendings. A stray child in the *Salle des Marchands* would find itself presented with an elaborate mechanical toy costing more than his father earned in a month. The Imperial maids were given the reversion of Josephine's clothes, and since Josephine bought a dress a day on the average, at prices rarely less than five hundred francs, it was a valuable perquisite. Even the Ladies of the Palace did not refuse the gifts of this sort offered them by the Empress.

The consequence was that Josephine was always in debt, and never even knew the amount of her indebtedness. Her dress allowance was fifteen thousand pounds sterling a year. Her debts each year generally amounted to thirty thousand. This expenditure is almost inconceivable, but if anything it is a moderate estimate.

On ordinary dresses Josephine spent in six years a million and a half of francs—sixty thousand pounds. This figure does not include the cost of the really expensive dresses, those for great occasions and for ceremonies. On jewellery Josephine spent almost the same sum. This jewellery was in addition to that which Napoleon bought her, which constituted the most magnificent regalia of any queen in Europe. Jewellery and dress account for twenty of the thirty-five thousand pounds spent annually by the Empress. The remaining fifteen thousand went unaccounted and unaccountable. Shoes (Josephine bought two pairs a day, on the average), lace and trimmings no

doubt helped to swell the total, but the greater part was expended without a thought in the Salle des Marchands and simply vanished into thin air. The Emperor believed in lavishness (not to say vulgarity) in matters imperial, but this wanton waste infuriated him. The slackness with which the accounts were kept was to his mind quite as bad. He threatened the tradespeople with imprisonment; he cut huge percentages off their bills; he made scene after scene with Josephine, and extorted promise after promise of reform; but it was of no avail. Each year he had to pay her debts to the extent of over half a million francs. Growing desperate, he installed a woman in the Empress's household as *intendante*, with authority over the accounts, and strict orders to check the expenditure. That year the debts were heavier than ever. Too many people were making a profit out of the Empress for any half measures to be effective. Commissions paid to the members of the household must have been enormous. And these members, too, had the reversion of what Josephine bought. This must have meant a large annual sum, and none of the Ladies of the Palace was going to exert herself unduly to reduce it.

To be thrifty was the one thing which Josephine could not or would not do to please her husband. Because of this there was endless friction between them. It is impossible to say that Napoleon was not indulgent, although it is easy to say that he does not deserve credit for indulgence in the matter of money wrung from other people.

As a matter of fact, Josephine was falling in with one of Napoleon's pet theories by her lavish

expenditure. Paris was the political centre of the Empire at that time. In fact, until the development of rapid methods of communication, Paris *was* the Empire as far as political thought was concerned. It was sound policy, therefore, to keep Paris contented even although it was done at the expense of the provinces. So everybody was encouraged to spend as much as possible in the capital. The huge sums given to officials carried with them an implied condition that they were to pass as rapidly as possible from the recipient to Paris shopkeepers. A general presented with five hundred acres in Westphalia or two thousand serfs in Poland was at once expected to have his town house redecorated and two more horses added to his stables. If he did not, then Napoleon was not above asking the reason why, in the presence, if it so happened, of the assembled Court or Staff. The money came, in the end, from the wretched peasants of Germany and Austria. Napoleon's wars did not add a penny to the national debt of France. His armies were supported by the subject countries on which they were billeted, and the vast funds with which he made so free came from the indemnities and contributions wrung by the tax-gatherers from the starving people. The fact that these were spent upon luxuries almost solely in Paris meant absenteeism on an international scale. It kept Paris, the most ungrateful of cities, quiet for the moment, but it kept Germany in the state of suppressed fury which was in the end to break out and cast down the principalities and kingdoms, that Napoleon had set up, like card houses.

Court or no Court, dissensions or no dissensions,

Napoleon was in many directions the most domestic of husbands. He was always willing to discuss clothes and fashions with his wife. He preferred dining with her *en famille* to dining in state. True it was that he let imperial matters interfere, just as other husbands' hobbies interfere with their relations with their wives. Josephine had to guide fashion towards wearing Lyon silk whether she liked it or not, and family dinner was often impossible on account of the demands of State. But Napoleon spent every night he could with his wife, and in the morning would often chat with her in the outlandish pyjama costume he affected. He liked to watch her being dressed; he liked to have her read him to sleep; and he never adopted the imperial manner towards her which he always displayed to his family. In fact, apart from stray infidelities, and from necessary ceremonies, Napoleon and Josephine spent their lives together much as any bourgeois couple would.

His letters to her while he was absent upsetting Empires were in the same strain. As was only to be expected with Josephine, they contain occasional hints that replies were not as frequently received as Napoleon would desire, but otherwise they are very like what a commercial traveller might write. He mentions the military operations on which he is engaged fairly casually, with no attempt at explaining them, much as the traveller might his commercial transactions to a wife he did not expect to understand them. Then he generally goes on to describe the weather. Next he gives some advice on how to behave towards various kings and princes with whom she is having dealings. He issues a few requests for

things he wants done. Occasionally he grumbles about the money she is spending. Then he makes some suggestions as to various presents she had better give various people. He ends up by saying that he misses her very much but that she had better not join him as things are rather uncomfortable where he is.

Substitute Manchester, say, for Moravia or Poland, and Mr. Brown of the house next door for the King of Bavaria or the Grand Duke of Baden; reduce the price of the presents suggested from twenty thousand francs to twenty; alter the allusions to armies and victories to mentions of deals in soft goods, and the letter becomes just such another as is written in dozens every day nowadays to wives in Tooting, or Aston, or Harlem.

Josephine's was a strange, self-contradictory life. It began in poverty and comfort, and it continued in splendour and debt. From dependence upon intrigue and charity it changed until she occupied the most splendid position in Europe. Alongside the splendour was this bourgeois domestic life; alongside this domesticity was her husband's continued unfaithfulness. The splendour carried with it the continual fear of the end, and when the end came it was masked by the splendour which hedged it round.

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPRESS

THE coronation did not give Josephine any large position in the State, save for that of chief ornament. She was purely decorative. But her decorative functions gave her large patronage, and for this she was continually in request. It is one of the best sides of her character that she never forgot old friends. It was sufficient for anyone to have helped her when she was in difficulties with her first husband, or when she was a widow, for her to exert herself to reward the kindness by well-paid employment, or by arranging an advantageous marriage, or even by parting with ready money. Into her care Napoleon gave the charities of the Empire. She had to settle the claims of all the hospitals and similar institutions in the country. She was greatly helped in the performance of this duty by the lavishness of the funds which were put at her disposal, but she certainly did her work well. One of the main reasons for the esteem in which she was held by the great bulk of the nation was in consequence of her tactful distribution of alms.

But immediately after the coronation she had a sharp reminder of the actual insignificance of her position. Napoleon had been President of the Italian

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Republic as well as First Consul of the French one, and now that he was Emperor in France it was a little incongruous that he should be President in Italy. The solution of the difficulty was simple. The Italian Republic became a kingdom, and Napoleon became its king. He left Paris immediately after the coronation in order to be crowned again in Milan. The Holy Roman Emperor was not going to be the only man in Europe to be referred to as His Imperial and Royal Majesty. Nevertheless, Josephine was not to be Queen of Italy at his side save by courtesy. Perhaps Josephine was gratified by the fact that she was thus the only courtesy queen in history, but we find no record of it. From a raised dais in Milan Cathedral Josephine watched a similar mummary to the one which had recently taken place at Notre Dame. Napoleon set a colourable imitation of the old Iron Crown of Lombardy on his head with the old formula, "God has given it me, woe to him who touches it."

There followed a Royal (Napoleon would perhaps have rather had it called an Imperial and Royal) progress through Northern Italy. Josephine had the satisfaction of seeing Eugène installed at Milan as Viceroy of Italy, before her departure, but, if we may believe the biographers, she was not as pleased as she might have been. Eugène by now was twenty-four years of age, and he had developed into Josephine's main prop and support. Patient, thoughtful, and always tender, he watched over his wayward mother as though she were a child. In the dreadful times of Napoleon's return from Egypt he had stood by her when everyone seemed her enemy. He was the one

man in all the world on whom she could rely ; he was also (though none knew it as yet) very nearly the one man on whom Napoleon could rely. For two years he was at her side, guiding and restraining, and Josephine could ill afford to part with him. It is a profound mystery how Alexandre de Beauharnais had ever contrived to have such a son—a mystery as nearly as profound as that not one of the insinuations made against Josephine ever pointed this out. Still, however much Josephine needed her son, duty kept him at Milan. As some sort of compensation there was the faint chance that he would succeed to the Crown of Italy on the death of his stepfather. The chance was slight, for it was common knowledge that Napoleon had offered the crown to his brothers Louis and Joseph in turn, only to be refused because a condition of acceptance was the waiving of all claims on the Imperial succession. Both Joseph and Louis aspired to the position of Phaeton—it is almost a pity that they never had the chance to show what they could do, seeing that mistakes are far more instructive to posterity than successes—and declined the immediate substance for a future shadow. That was no guarantee, however, that Italy would not devolve on one of their younger sons.

What ended the Royal progress sooner than was expected was news from Paris. It was not the news for which Napoleon had been yearning for a whole year now. Villeneuve's fleets had not entered the Channel. The two hundred thousand men of the Army of the Ocean were not about to pass the narrow seas and humble the nation of shopkeepers that defied the Emperor so stubbornly from the safe shelter of

the Straits of Dover. Nelson had not been defeated. Instead, the persistent enmity of the English had at last set on foot another Coalition. Francis of Austria was mobilizing his army. Alexander the Czar had set in motion a hundred thousand of his troops. Even self-seeking, double-dealing Prussia was showing active signs of dissatisfaction. Napoleon and Josephine raced back to Paris from Turin without a stop, he to set the Grand Army in motion against these new foes, she troubled and worried lest the Emperor of all the Russias and the Holy Roman Emperor should succeed (and she could hardly doubt the power of these great ones to do whatever they wished) in destroying this other and upstart Emperor.

In Paris there was trouble and almost panic. Josephine had to restore calm by her unruffled demeanour at the entertainments she hastened to give, while her husband devoted himself to the task of making the Grand Army ready for the new campaign. All along the narrow seas, from Brest to Hanover, the different corps had to receive their marching orders and make ready for the march that was to end at the other side of Europe. Murat was sent posting off under a false name to travel the roads of the Black Forest along which he was to lead the Cavalry Reserve. Berthier at the Ministry of War was working night and day to replace the deficiencies of horses and material. Napoleon himself was intimidating Prussia, cajoling Bavaria, bullying Spain. He was reviewing troops and arranging for the carrying on of the government during his absence. He was even putting a few extra touches to the Code Napoleon. Above all he was planning the march to

the Danube which was to confirm him in his Empire for nine more years.

By September everything was in motion. The camp at Boulogne had been broken up and the army corps were marching into Germany. The Guard were hurrying to Strasbourg, alternating marches with rides in the carts Napoleon had collected for them. The Emperor came with them, and with him was Josephine.

At Strasbourg Josephine waited, while the Grand Army vanished into the fog of war in the heart of Germany. No one knew what was likely to happen. Somewhere far ahead Murat was pushing his cavalry patrols through the Black Forest. On his left there were columns of blue-coated infantry marching desperately for the Danube. Mack with eighty thousand Austrians had pushed into Bavaria and was awaiting their advance. But no one knew, no one could guess (least of all the Austrian Commander-in-Chief) what were the intentions of the man in the grey coat who had left his wife behind in Strasbourg and whose carriage was now jolting over the Bavarian roads at Murat's heels. France waited in a hush of expectation. Strasbourg waited in an agony. Then came a few fleeting liftings of the veil. Murat had won a three-shots-and-a-gallop victory at Wertingen. Ney had won a dashing little victory at Elchingen. These successes were on the far side of Ulm. It seemed as though Mack had evacuated that most important fortress—or else—or else—it seemed too good to be true. Then came a bulletin, blazing with exultation and glory. It was not too good to be true, after all. Mack had been hemmed in at Ulm.

Twenty thousand of his men had already been made prisoners. He himself had surrendered with thirty thousand more. A few thousand were escaping along the roads to Bohemia, with Murat hard behind them. The remainder were scattered fugitives flying to Tyrol or skulking in the villages. The army of Francis of Austria had ceased to exist.

France went into an ecstasy of joy. The bells of every church in the country rang madly. Josephine attended a *Te Deum* at Strasbourg Cathedral. Everyone looked upon the war as already won, and indulged in extravagant rejoicing. But the blue-coated soldiers went on marching through Austria, twenty miles a day through roads like sloughs, bivouacking in the November cold at night, their only food potatoes grubbed from the fields and eaten raw when the rain was too heavy to allow of bivouac fires. Sickness, hunger, toil and misery, with a battle against odds at the end, were their lot. Yet they did not complain. They were mesmerized by their stern Emperor in the grey overcoat with the green of the Chasseurs of the Guard beneath it. Even had they known for certain that he was going to send them to their deaths in Germany and Spain and Poland and Russia they would still have fought for him at present.

No one among them knew that the turning point in the long struggle had already been passed. They did not know that it was not Ulm, it was not the next battle to which they were hurrying so eagerly which was to settle the fate of Europe. That had already been settled on the day that Ulm surrendered, but at a point far distant. For on that day Nelson had

led the English fleet against Villeneuve, and the main hope of France had vanished under cover of the fog of cannon smoke that had massed round the locked fleets.

Even Josephine knew nothing of Trafalgar. She had been busy keeping more than royal state in Strasbourg. The tradesmen had rubbed their hands over their good fortune and hastened to reap the harvest presented to them by a blind providence. In the two months that she was there Josephine probably spent more than was spent normally in the town in a year. But the two months came to an end, and the shopkeepers sorrowfully reduced their prices when Josephine left. A letter had come for her from her husband at the head of the army in Moravia. She was to take a part in the *haute politique*. She was to have a hand in the destiny of nations, in the fate of millions of human beings. She was to arrange for three marriages, in other words.

Towards the end of November Josephine set out for Stuttgart, Carlsruhe, and Munich. These were the capitals of Napoleon's South German allies, who were soon to become his vassals of the Confederation of the Rhine. Napoleon gave her careful instructions as to her behaviour. She was to treat them *de haut en bas*, as became an Empress to whose husband they were to be shortly indebted for an increase in their territory to twice its size and for promotion to the close circle of kings.

Josephine, or perhaps Napoleon's Foreign Office, saw that she was treated with the deference due to her. Pooh-Bah himself would not have carped at her reception. At the frontier of each state in turn

she was met by the ruling family and conducted through triumphal arches to palaces made specially ready for her. Everywhere there was homage and adulation of the most fawning description. The jackals of Germany were looking forward to a fat share in the spoils that Napoleon and his devoted infantry were to gain, and they were not going to ruin their chances for lack of a little well-timed sycophancy. Had Austerlitz resulted otherwise than it did they might have sought some return for their outlay by insults to the woman in their midst, but as it was they were bound to be polite until news came.

But Napoleon wanted more than lip-service from them. He wanted the same sort of spoils as had been acquired by conquerors even in the days before history. He wanted their young maidens to grace his triumphal processions. Bavaria was to hand over one of her Princesses to Eugène, and another to the devoted Berthier. Wurtemberg was to find a Princess for Jerome Bonaparte. The Hereditary Prince of Baden was to forget his centuries of Royal ancestors and was to take as a wife a cousin of Josephine's. This was what Josephine was to arrange.

She threw herself into the business heart and soul. Not only was it still pleasant to have dealings with those who would have been received with honour even at the dearly remembered Court of Louis and Marie Antoinette, but surely it confirmed her in her position to become mother-in-law of a Princess, and to have her protégée, whom she had found living on charity, marked out to be a future Grand Duchess?

Her success was great, though no one can tell

whether it was not due in great part to the amazing news of Austerlitz which arrived soon after she reached Munich. The peace of Pressburg and Napoleon's arrival swept away the last objections of the ruling families. They could refuse nothing to the man who commanded two hundred thousand men within their frontiers, and in whose gift lay populations of millions. At midnight on December 31st, 1805, Napoleon arrived in Munich, to be escorted by torchlight through the streets. Next morning the Elector proclaimed himself King Maximilian Joseph I of Bavaria, and despatched his armies to put down the promising rebellion which had already broken out in his new province of Tyrol. Five days later Napoleon wrote to Eugène to come to Munich, and a week after that Eugène was married to the Princess Augusta of Bavaria.

Napoleon had had to make concessions to the prejudices of his stepson's new relations. They, not unnaturally, wanted to see him more settled in life than the empty dignity of Viceroy of Italy would warrant. Napoleon, to satisfy them, conferred upon him a few more empty dignities. He adopted him as his son, and made a vague promise that Eugène should inherit Italy provided that no more suitable applicant for the position should appear in the meantime. As a consequence of this Eugène signed his name as Eugène-Napoleon de France.

The formality of adoption meant nothing, but only Napoleon realized this. Eugène had no possible chance of inheriting the throne of France (indeed, the form used debarred this), and he had very little chance of inheriting Italy. The Italians, of course,

had not been consulted—such an idea did not occur to anybody—and no later Bonaparte would bear to see a Beauharnais on the throne of Italy. But Josephine attached a world of meaning to the unmeaning ceremony. She never ceased to cherish hopes of the Empire for her son, and she regarded his retention of the Iron Crown as absolutely certain. So Eugène took his Augusta back to Milan, there to reign by grace of Napoleon and to rule by his precepts, and Josephine and Napoleon began a triumphal journey back through Stuttgart and Carlsruhe to Paris. Everything was simply wonderful.

In Paris there were further dealings in kings. Stéphanie de Beauharnais, much against her will, was married off to the stupid, ugly, Hereditary Prince of Baden at the most brilliant of all the Napoleonic receptions. She had to be coerced into the consummation of the business, but that was a small matter compared to the gaining of the alliance of Baden in the approaching inevitable war with Prussia.

Josephine's son was Viceroy with a fair chance of becoming king; her daughter was now to be a queen. The Dutch Republic had long been subject to France, and republics were now at a considerable discount in these days of Empires. Clearly it ought to become a kingdom, and in that case the only king it could have was a Bonaparte. Napoleon went to the length of consulting the population, but the Dutch people were not really interested. All they wanted was peace, and they stood no chance of obtaining it whatever while Napoleon was at the head of Europe. One half of the money spent by the Dutch people came from investments abroad, and a fair proportion of the

rest from their carrying trade. As long as Holland was at war with England she could have no carrying trade and no money from her investments. Consequently it made no difference to them whether Napoleon governed them through a Grand Pensionary or through a crowned prefect. It happened, therefore, that less than a quarter of them troubled to vote in the plebiscite, and of these the majority voted against the rule of Louis. But Napoleon was never at a loss for an expedient, and, declaring that the three-quarters who had not voted must have been in favour of Louis, he established him on the throne. It is extraordinary that Louis should have accepted such an appointment under such conditions, knowing as he must have done that his every action would be regulated by his brother, but he was more worried as to whether his health would endure the climate than whether he would be a successful king.

Hortense was more in doubt about the matter. She and Louis had mutually agreed to worry each other as little as possible, but her valetudinarian, moody, dreamy husband was her worst cross in life, and though she could endure him amid the distractions of Paris, she very much doubted her capacity of endurance under the added strain of the solemnities of the Hague. As an additional burden for her, Napoleon was continually urging her to provide another heir as well as the much-loved Napoleon Charles, by this time five years of age. Josephine, to whom this child meant so much as a guarantee of the future, was constantly urging her to the same end. It was bad luck for Hortense, to whom even the sight of the husband Josephine had obtained for

her was obnoxious, and she only yielded to their entreaties after the unfortunate death of Napoleon Charles from croup. Then, on two separate occasions, she conquered her prejudices sufficiently to take another honeymoon with Louis. After the first was born a son, later to die while fighting for the Carbonari in the rising of 1831; after the second was born the son who in the end attained the throne of his uncle and ruled for twenty troubled years as Napoleon III.

About this time sovereignties were being scattered freely among Napoleon's satellites. Masséna led sixty thousand men into the Kingdom of Naples, sent the unspeakable Bourbon rulers packing, slaughtered the wretched *lazzaroni* who rose in their defence, and before being relieved of his command for his usual theft of state funds, set Joseph Bonaparte on the throne. Murat was given a few hundred thousand subjects on the Rhine and was set up as Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves, while Berthier, the Chief of Staff, became Prince of Neuchatel, Talleyrand, Prince of Benevento, and Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo. Napoleon was fulfilling his cherished dream of having all the officers of his Empire crowned heads. He still had not given up his hopes of bringing even kings like those of Bavaria and Wurtemberg so far under his domination as to compel them to take up like offices, so that they, too, would grace his processions, and, more important, have houses in Paris and bring more profit to the shopkeepers there.

The Court became desperately complicated in its etiquette. Elevation to kingly rank gave some of

these princes additional precedence; to others it was a positive disadvantage in this respect. As Grand Duchess of Berg Caroline Murat (*née* Bonaparte) was only entitled to a stool in Josephine's presence; but as an Imperial Princess she was entitled to a chair with a back. If she stood on her rights as an Imperial Princess and took precedence of the Grand Duchess of Baden the latter was seriously annoyed, because Baden was immeasurably more important than the mushroom state she represented. If she did not, then all the other petty German States wanted to take precedence of the Imperial family as well. Kings and Grand Dukes and Sovereign Princes were passing in and out of the Tuileries at all hours, and had to be greeted with the appropriate honours. The well-fed, over-paid and over-dressed footmen were seriously troubled at having to spend nearly all their time rolling and unrolling the red carpet which was the prerogative of sovereigns.

Into Court circles had now entered the Villain of the Piece. He was to play Iago to Josephine's Desdemona, and Mephistopheles to Napoleon's Faust. There was nothing very striking about his personal appearance, nor about his record so far. As Ambassador from Francis of Austria to the Court at Berlin he had failed in his attempt to bring Prussia into the war during the crucial weeks before Austerlitz. He was not at first sure that diplomacy was his *métier*, and he had been brought into the Austrian diplomatic service rather against his will, because his family had for many generations been represented therein. However, time was to prove that as Ambassador he had found his true rôle (a doubtful

recommendation), and for forty years Metternich was to sway European opinion.

He arrived at a delicate moment. France was still nominally at war with Russia, although neither nation could injure the other as matters stood. Austria was prostrate. Prussia was still fawning upon the conqueror of Austerlitz. It was necessary for Metternich to be energetic and cautious. Never at any time in the history of the world had so much depended upon the whim of one man, and Metternich set himself to study that one man and his whims so that no crisis should find him unprepared. He sought for assistants in his task, and with his usual cold-hearted clear-headedness he selected the best. Fouché would help him. Fouché would help anyone who paid well enough. Talleyrand was a possible assistant should Napoleon's power ever seem likely to end. Metternich easily established himself on friendly terms with him; they spoke the same sort of language and had met many times on diplomatic business. But there was one person who knew more of Napoleon than anyone else, who had known him for ten years now, and who was in a position to know his moods when no one else could even guess them. This was Josephine, and Metternich set himself to win Josephine's confidence as rapidly as might be. He could do this, too, with Napoleon's full approval, for Napoleon made one of the very few mistakes of his life in the estimation of character when he mentally tabulated Metternich as harmless.

To the winning of Josephine Metternich devoted himself with characteristic application. His courtly

manners were his chief weapon in this case, and they were nearly all he needed, for good manners made the strongest appeal of all to Josephine's affections. With his smooth tongue and graceful compliments, and the well-timed gifts from his Imperial master that he presented from time to time with such facile grace he soon held Josephine's confidence. It was small use to him at present, but it was to be invaluable later.

Hardly had Metternich established himself in Paris than another war broke out. Prussia rushed blindly into the retribution that was no more than her due for her double dealing and mercenary diplomacy of the year before. The war party forced Frederick William out of his inglorious neutrality, and quick as lightning Napoleon flung the Grand Army against him. Once more Josephine begged to be allowed to accompany her husband, but as in the preceding year he only permitted her to travel with him as far as the Rhine, this time arranging for her to stay at Mayence. There was less doubt of the result of the new campaign than there had been in the minds of the French when Napoleon had set out for Austerlitz, but for some reason Josephine was intolerably anxious. The parting at Mayence was painful to them both. It is said on good authority that the Emperor even shed tears as he took leave of his consort. He may have done. It was a habit of Napoleon's to throw himself in earnest into any part he happened to have to play.

Less than a fortnight sufficed to settle the fate of Prussia. Thirteen days after Napoleon left Mayence a messenger came riding into the town on a lathered

horse. He bore the news that the army of Frederick the Great existed no longer, that at Jena the Emperor had struck down one army, while Davout had struck down another at Auerstädt, and the Prussians were now no more than a flying mob of fugitives at the mercy of the victors. After this came messenger after messenger, each bearing news as wonderful as the last. Berlin had been entered by the triumphant French, with Davout the man of iron at their head. Fortress after fortress had opened its gates. Division after division of the Prussian army had surrendered. The Prussian populace had welcomed them with open arms. Murat and Blücher were racing across Germany, the one vainly seeking safety, the other striving to cut him off. Last came the news that Blücher had been hemmed in on the frontier of Denmark, and had surrendered with the last survivors of Jena.

There followed an ominous pause. The war was not yet over. Somewhere in the wild plains of Prussian Poland the Russian army was swarming forward to the attack. Desperate fighting under the most unfavourable conditions would necessarily follow. Josephine wrote imploring Napoleon to allow her to join him. He refused, although at first he dallied with the idea. Poland in winter was no place for a woman. He might perhaps allow her to come as far as Berlin. But even as Josephine was cherishing the hope conveyed by this letter another bulletin arrived. It roared as usual of victory and booty. But reading between the lines one could guess at other things. Well one might, indeed. For the bulletin told of the battle of Eylau, where

Augereau's corps had lost nine-tenths of its numbers, where the day had only been saved by Murat charging at the head of twenty thousand cavalry, and where forty thousand corpses were still piled up in the fields. The army was to go into winter quarters, and Josephine was to give up all hope of joining Napoleon and return to Paris. Josephine did not know it yet, but there was another and most cogent reason for Napoleon's desire to keep her away from him. He had met at Warsaw, a few days before Eylau, a very beautiful young Polish woman, and Napoleon and Poniatowski and Duroc were all combining to force her into unfaithfulness to her husband, and to induce her to share the château of Finkenstein with the Emperor in whose gift lay the freedom of Poland.

Later arrivals from Poland gave Josephine certain knowledge of the success of this intrigue and she was abandoned to the torments of jealousy. She was helpless, and had to return to Paris without expostulation, but in Paris she could not keep silence over the cause of her unhappiness, and soon the whole capital knew of it. To the Parisians it was only a toothsome piece of gossip, but because of it Metternich was able to predict to his master with fair certainty that Napoleon, if successful in the present campaign, would set up some sort of Poland again. He also was confirmed in his belief that it would be possible to part Josephine and Napoleon, and replace the Empress with someone who would be more useful to Austria. He doubtless appeared the very picture of sympathy if the subject ever came up in the course of his conversations with her.

Just when the troops in Poland were on the move

again a terrible blow fell upon the unfortunate Empress. Napoleon Charles, her favourite grandchild, died of croup at the Hague. He was in most people's eyes the heir to the throne, and in consequence he was the surest guarantee to Josephine of her position. She had been passionately fond of the boy both for what he was and what he meant to her, and his death seemed to her the beginning of the end. So it was. It was an event of international importance. Josephine left Paris and hurried to Laeken to console her daughter. Napoleon wrote to the government commanding it to offer a prize for the doctor who could find a cure for croup. Louis Bonaparte was roused out of his hypochondriasis to arrange with Hortense for the birth of another heir. In the trouble that engulfed her Josephine hardly cared about the news just arrived of Friedland, where the Russian army was smitten into fragments, and Napoleon was made the temporary master of Europe.

For months Josephine was to care little about her husband's success. His letters to her during the campaign of Friedland had been colder than usual, although they had been a little more cordial during the negotiations at Tilsit. Everywhere there were rumours of divorce, and Napoleon, on his return, was non-committal on the subject. Fouché, egged on by Metternich, who wanted a straw to find in which way the wind was blowing, approached her directly, and, hinting that he had heard the rumours prevalent, asked her what she intended to do should her husband determine on divorce. Josephine was horrified, and jumped to the conclusion that this was really a feeler from Napoleon himself. She clung to

her position and to the husband she had grown to love so dearly with all her strength.

It was a losing struggle, but Josephine rallied all her reserves of charm to postpone the inevitable. She could not believe it was inevitable. She won Napoleon back to her for a brief space, and then demanded from him as to whether he had instructed Fouché to question her. Napoleon had not, though it was an action of which he was perfectly capable, and this annoyed him all the more. Fouché had already become a nuisance, and Napoleon had reason to suspect him of intriguing along with Talleyrand. This disclosure of his meddling infuriated him, and Fouché fell like Lucifer, although, unlike that other evil spirit, he was to rise again in a year or two. He was packed off into the outer darkness of the provinces, with the scanty dignity of Governor-General as his sole consolation. Josephine had apparently won yet another victory, but at best it was a Pyrrhic victory.

That year of 1807 was a period of the most intense strain. Napoleon had brought Marie Walewska back with him to Paris from Finkenstein, and he was a frequent visitor at her house. About Josephine's Court was more than one woman to whom he was paying attention (if Napoleon's primitive methods of courtship are worthy of such a description) and everywhere the question of divorce was being openly discussed. Hortense's brief reconciliation to Louis Bonaparte had come to a sudden end and the couple were once more at daggers drawn, although the arrival of him who was later to be Napoleon III was expected shortly. Louis's position as King of

Holland was none too secure, as Napoleon's frequent letters of censure showed, and Louis, or rather his marriage to Hortense, was one of the chief props of Josephine's position. On the other side of the picture it was the period of the height of Napoleon's power, when every nation on the Continent was either his ally or his slave. Never were the Imperial Courts more brilliant. The marriage of young Jerome Bonaparte to Catherine of Wurtemberg was the occasion of the most splendid ceremony ever seen at the Tuileries. Hapsburgs, Bourbons, even Romanoffs arrived to pay homage to the Emperor of the West. There were some, indeed, who paid homage instead to the Empress. Even at this time Josephine was still making conquests. There was a young Prince of Mecklenburg who fell to her charms as completely as had Napoleon in the old days. The gossips seized on this piece of tittle-tattle with avidity, and Fouché reported it to his Emperor, and Metternich reported it to *his* Emperor, but there was nothing in it on Josephine's side. She was too worried to trifle with such things, even if the Prince had taken her fancy, but it was a tribute to her charms that even as a waning star she could still attract a few moths. In history there are few more bitter examples of irony—on the one side Josephine the Empress superbly gowned and mistress of the most brilliant Court in Europe, with Princes at her feet, and the affection of a whole people as her support; on the other side Josephine the woman, deeply in debt, hated by her family, red-eyed in the morning through the tears she had shed over the lost love of her husband, and yet having to pass her days smiling

graciously, and eternally, eternally, saying the right thing.

1807 merged into 1808, and the brilliance showed no sign of cessation. There were ominous rumours, perhaps, from Austria, where Metternich's master was slowly building up his army for another attempt against the upstart, but Napoleon had beaten Austria before and would do it again. A few more victories would enable him to make Princes of the Marshals he was now making Dukes, and the presence of a few more Princes was highly desirable. For these few fleeting months the Empire seemed built upon a rock.

In the south a division of the invincible Grand Army was preparing to march upon Portugal, where there was still some show of disobedience to the all-powerful Emperor, but Portugal's fate seemed sealed, for Spain and France were in complete agreement about it, and had already signed the partition treaty that was to blot Portugal from the map, just as Hesse and Hanover and the States of the Church had disappeared. Junot was in command, with a Marshalate promised him in the event of success, and perhaps the title of Duke of Nazareth in addition. Moreover, there was another French army moving in support of Junot's, and it was already dexterously obtaining possession of the Spanish fortresses. This additional menace would be sure to keep Spain faithful to the alliance with France which had already endured for over ten years, although it had brought Spain nothing but shame and disaster.

A little trivial news came trickling through from Madrid. The people had at last begun to show dis-

satisfaction with the rule of the unspeakable Godoy, Prince of the Peace and paramour of the Queen. The King of Spain was crazy ; his heir, the Prince of the Asturias was little better. The Queen was middle-aged and foolish, but for ten years Godoy had managed to drive this unwieldy team as he wished. Now it seemed as if the Spaniards had at last tired of the business.

It also seemed a heaven-sent opportunity for Napoleon. Murat, in command of the steadily growing French army in Spain, had gained possession by treacherous methods of nearly all the Spanish fortresses ; the wretched King, driven to remove his beloved Godoy from his offices, had abdicated in favour of the Prince of the Asturias, and had later rescinded the abdication and had accused in maudlin fashion his son of treason. Surely now was the time for Napoleon to set the coping stone on the edifice of his power and to make Spain his in theory as well as in fact.

The King and the Queen and the Prince, that idiotic trio, accompanied by Godoy (and even by Godoy's wife, who shared Godoy with the Queen much as the King shared the Queen with Godoy) at Napoleon's invitation decided to lay their troubles before him and leave it to him to find some solution to the difficulties. Napoleon had no doubt that he would be able to do so. In fact he had a remedy in his mind which would cut the Gordian knot with a vengeance, and he hastened to meet the fantastic party at Bayonne at the same time as he wrote to Murat to strengthen his grip on the country and to get the Grandees into his power.

At Bayonne began a curious conference. The little château of Marrac was stretched to its utmost capacity to hold the households of the Emperor, the King, the Queen, the Prince Royal, and the Prince of the Peace. It was an added complication that half these households, following the example of their masters and mistresses, were not on speaking terms with the other half. It took nearly as much diplomacy to fit them all in as had been displayed at Tilsit.

Napoleon told them of his scheme for settlement, which was merely that all parties interested should resign their claims on the throne for which they were squabbling and should instead give it to him to bestow upon someone who should make better use of it. Not unnaturally, they demurred, as soon as they had recovered their small wits, of whose use the coolness of the offer had completely deprived them. Napoleon argued, pointing out the advantages which would result. The King and the Queen could settle down in some comfortable country château with their dear Godoy, and that would be well for them, for Godoy was undoubtedly too unpopular just at present to return to Spain. The Prince of the Asturias would have another château and a huge pension and could enjoy life untroubled by the business of state. There would be no difficulty about finding a few companions of the other sex whose sole business would be seeing that he was comfortable. And yet the Royal family were strangely obstinate. They displayed unaccountable reluctance to forego the delights of ruling over Spain and Mexico and South America. Napoleon proceeded to call up additional arguments.

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The most effective one was Josephine, whom he had posted in a strategical position at Bordeaux.

She came at a word, and entered into the game in obedience to his instructions. The most influential members of the party were undoubtedly the Queen and Godoy, and the Queen and Godoy became the object of Josephine's well-tried power of fascination. No one knows exactly what went on. It is certain that the Queen, dowdy and out of the world through constant seclusion in living graves like Aranjuez and the Escorial, must have looked upon the brilliant and beautiful Josephine as a being from another world. She was not quite right in her head, and the little gifts that Josephine brought her charmed her as gifts always please such people.

Tortoiseshell combs prepared the way to a throne, and the gift of a Cashmere shawl, one of the few of its kind that had yet penetrated to Europe, was a great help. Josephine tried to show the poor old woman how to wear her clothes so as to appear more beautiful to her wonderful Godoy. She brought up a few dressmakers from the host that always pursued her to assist in the same desirable consummation. The half-crazed old thing was delighted. Very soon Josephine was able to report to Napoleon that the Queen's opposition had evaporated.

There was Godoy still to be satisfied, for it would be a risky attempt to try to prevail on the King supported solely by the Queen, seeing that he had the highest opinion of Godoy. However, Godoy was amenable in the end. Perhaps Josephine seduced him from the path of power ; perhaps it was the bribes

and threats of the Emperor. More probably it was a combination of the two.

This difficulty settled, the Prince of the Asturias gave no trouble. At any display of obstinacy on his part he was given a slight reminder of what happened to another Bourbon Prince who had been an obstacle in Napoleon's path—the young Duc d'Enghien, who now lay coffinless under the earth of the fosse of the prison of Vincennes. The mere threat was enough to send the semi-idiotic prince into a paroxysm of terror, and the quiet life that was offered him was enough compensation after it to induce him to give up his birthright and betray the people who had set their trust in him. Josephine had won for her husband a kingdom, which he proceeded to give to his brother Joseph on the nominal authority of the Grandees whom Murat had forwarded from Madrid. It was Josephine's doing, and she was delighted. She was not to know that her success had opened that "running sore" of the Peninsular War which was to drain the strength from the Empire and was only to end when Portuguese and Spaniards and the hateful English had cleared Spain of Frenchmen and had pressed on into France itself beyond even the place where the conference had been held. But successful or not, it must have been with relief that Josephine left that assembly of hysterical half-wits to return to the clearer air of Paris.

The Peninsular War developed in a flash, despite the slaughter that Murat made among the Madrid insurgents. Joseph fled from his new capital as soon as he arrived there, to find shelter with demoralized armies behind the Ebro. Duhesme was hemmed in

at Barcelona; Dupont surrendered with twenty thousand men at Baylen. Only the Grand Army with Napoleon himself at their head could put down the insurrection. Before he could go so far south Napoleon had to make all secure in the north, and it was for this purpose that he called the conference of Erfurt with the Czar and the rulers of Germany.

Josephine, flushed with one triumph, begged for leave to accompany him. Permission was refused. Napoleon wanted to obtain more from Alexander than mere approval of his Spanish adventure. He wanted to send out a few feelers to ascertain how much chance there was of his obtaining the hand of a Princess of the house of Romanoff in the not unlikely event of a divorce. Josephine, with her charms appealing vastly to the sentimental young emperor, would be a decided handicap to Napoleon in any such negotiations. Then she would be sure to hear about it, and there would be repetitions of the scenes that Napoleon dreaded. Napoleon was very decided in his refusal to allow Josephine to go with him to Erfurt.

At Erfurt Alexander was non-committal on the subject of the possible marriage between a princess of Russia and the Emperor of the French. Napoleon construed his dilatoriness as his habitual hesitation, and rejoiced over the apparent success of his manœuvres. Josephine's doom was sealed from that moment. But he continued to write her affectionate letters, and he was very loving to her during the few days that he was in Paris on his return before setting out for Spain.

With two hundred thousand men Napoleon

rushed into Spain. The wretched Spanish armies gave way before him in a despicable manner. He won three battles in as many weeks, and marched into Madrid in triumph. He did not stay there long, for the English, who had already succeeded in turning Junot neck and crop out of Portugal, came marching into Spain unexpectedly and appeared without warning on his communications. It was in vain that Napoleon swung his armies about and marched them two hundred miles over vile roads in winter weather. Sir John Moore had made his thrust and saved Spain, and now he fell back to Corunna and effected his escape. Napoleon was not present at that last fight, where he would have received a valuable object lesson in the obstinacy of the British infantry. On the road from Astorga he had received news that brought him back to Paris as fast as the horses that died in the traces of his carriage could bring him.

The news was varied, and all of it was serious. Austria, despite the smooth words of Metternich, was really arming against him. Talleyrand and Fouché were conspiring against him. And Josephine wrote in desperate anxiety that Caroline Bonaparte was scheming to obtain the throne for her husband, Murat. Spain was far too distant from the centre of affairs for Napoleon to stay there long, and despite the reassuring nature of his letters to Josephine he was decidedly anxious. For three months he toiled in Paris to set his affairs in order, and, as events were to prove, this was longer than he ought to have stayed. The Austrian threat was a real one. Single-handed she was to attempt what it took all Europe

to do four years later when Napoleon was considerably weaker. Napoleon under-estimated the time she would take to mobilize, and had to set off for the Danube in a hurry.

Once again Josephine accompanied him to the confines of France and made her temporary home in Strasbourg, just as she had done during the campaign of Ulm. Once again she knew what it was to wait palpitating for news from the seat of war. It trickled in gradually. Napoleon had just succeeded in arriving at headquarters in time to undo the blundering work of Berthier. Davout had made his wonderful flank march and had saved an army for France just as he had done at Aüerstädt. Eckmühl and Ebersburg had flung the Austrian army back through Vienna. But there was one alarming item of news. Napoleon himself was numbered among the wounded. At the storming of Ratisbon a Tyrolese rifleman had managed to hit him at the extreme range of his weapon. It was the merest scratch, in the heel, but it was enough to cause a panic in the French ranks for a time, and it caused a worse panic in Josephine's heart and in those of the politicians. It was sufficient to show what would happen should Napoleon meet with the sudden death which was not at all unlikely. Empire and army would alike go to pieces. The sequel was not so obvious, but no other Emperor would reign, at least for some time. Josephine would lose her position at the same time as she lost the husband she loved to the greatest degree of which she was capable.

But despite his wound, Napoleon had won his way to Vienna, and was dating his bulletins and his

letters from Schönbrunn. The Army of Austria, beaten but still undestroyed, awaited him beyond the Danube. Breathlessly Josephine and France waited for tidings of another Austerlitz. They did not come. Instead there came a bulletin that read strangely like the one that had announced the battle of Eylau, and of even more serious import. True, it claimed a victory, but on this occasion Napoleon did not even retain the useless battlefield. He had striven to cross the Danube and had been flung back with frightful losses. Even the bulletin admitted this, and the rumours which were flying across Europe hinted at much more. St. Hilaire was dead, killed in the hour of defeat while the battle swayed desperately between Aspern and Essling. Lannes was dying in Vienna, struck down by a cannon ball which shattered his legs and left him to the inevitable gangrene. The ladies of the Court mourned the death of dozens of gallant young officers. The Empire tottered.

At this dramatic moment arrived Metternich in Strasbourg. He had been detained in reprisal for the arrest of the French Ambassador in Vienna, and was now on his way to be exchanged. Josephine, racked by anxiety, entertained him that evening and gave vent to her fears. She hinted that Metternich might meet the retreating French army while on his way. Metternich was as courtly as ever, and assured her that under any circumstances she could rely on his unfailing support. Fine words these, from the man who hated the Napoleonic system and its originator worse than anything else in life, and was working day and night to destroy it, and was praying

in his heart that the rumours of the French defeat were even less than the truth, and who at the same time was considering how he could induce Napoleon to divorce the woman he was assuring in this manner and marry an Austrian princess, should by any chance the rumours not be correct. Then he went on to Vienna, to witness the defeat of the Austrians at Wagram, to be appointed First Minister of the Austrian Empire, and to plan the divorce, and the eventual downfall of the Empire of Napoleon. Josephine never saw him again.

Napoleon was toiling fiercely to redeem his losses. The Archduke Charles refrained from attacking him, and left him a free hand to re-organize and concentrate. The crisis passed, and Napoleon wrote to Josephine to go to Plombières for her usual course of the waters so as to reassure public opinion. At Plombières great news reached her in driblets. Eugène had justified the trust reposed in him, and had routed the enemy opposed to his Army of Italy and reached the Grand Army with vital reinforcements in the nick of time. Then a better-judged advance across the Danube had resulted in the defeat of the Austrians, and the mistake of the Archduke in retreating on Bohemia instead of on Moravia had forced the Austrians into an ignoble peace. Eugène had made the victory possible, and had stoutly borne his part in the battle.

Josephine was able to return to Malmaison with a lighter heart than she had known for months. Napoleon was writing to her very affectionately, chaffing her and advising her to be circumspect in her actions as he might return unexpectedly at any

moment. She did not know that while he was writing these letters to her he was living at Schönbrunn with Marie Walewska, who was about to bear him a son. She did not know, either, that he had written to his architects ordering them secretly to build a dividing wall between his apartments and hers at Fontainebleau. Nor did she know of the tortuous intrigues which were proceeding at Vienna, where Napoleon was trying to obtain the promise of a Russian wife for himself, while the Russians were trying not to commit themselves, while Talleyrand was helping them, and while Metternich was also trying to prevent any such match so that it might be an Austrian Princess on whom the lot should fall.

Josephine knew of none of these things. Her husband had once more shown that he was master of the Continent, and said that he loved her. That was enough for her, and she went tranquilly on with the only pleasures allowed her. There was her morning toilet. Then she interviewed the masses of shopkeepers who awaited her attention. Then came the afternoon toilet. Then Court business or a drive or inspection of her beloved gardens and hot-houses. Then the toilet of the evening. And after dinner and the dull evening that followed came the preparation for bed, which took nearly as long as the morning toilet, which usually lasted almost three hours. In the matter of personal luxury Josephine was not as profuse as many of her rivals. She did not, like Pauline Bonaparte, indulge in a hot milk bath and a cold milk shower every day. Nor did she have negro boys to attend her in her dressing-

room. But for all that she spent six hours a day over her personal adornment.

It is hardly to be wondered at. There was little else she could do. She was too hemmed in by etiquette to enjoy social amenities. Her musical taste was limited, and she had little liking for reading. The one thing she could do, short of staying fallow and utterly torpid, was to dress and undress herself. If it be remembered first that she was accustomed to a busy life, and second that upon her personal charms depended her husband's love and the position of Empress of the French the violence of her indulgence in dress is excused.

For that matter she did good work for the Empire in this way. She set the fashions for Europe, and as she always wore French-made clothes she provided employment for many people. The export of French silk during her years as Empress was ten times as great as it had been under Louis XVI. The money which flowed through the smuggler's hands from England to buy French fashions helped considerably in that draining of England's gold which was one of the objects of the Continental System, and which more than once left the English Government seriously embarrassed for bullion to pay subsidies and the expenses of armies in the field.

The undeniable beauty of the Empire fashions was due almost entirely to her good taste. They reflected her fancies in more ways than one. In Martinique as a child she had grown accustomed to wearing little clothing, and she persisted in the practice all her life. It was impossible to wear much underclothing beneath an Empire gown. Petticoats were generally

impracticable. Another kind of under-garment for women had not yet come into popularity, and all Josephine (and every other woman as well) wore under her frock was a chemise. The women of the period seem to have had the same blind trust in Fate that distinguished the Emperor, and occasionally (as can be read in some of the memoirs of the period) their trust was betrayed. The revelations following a fall from horseback were such that in the end women, and even Josephine, began to arrange matters in a less risky fashion. It is an interesting matter for conjecture to try to estimate how much farther into debt Josephine would have fallen had she had the additional opportunities for expenditure afforded by the present day, when underclothing is as great an item of expense as outer clothing. Even as it was Josephine usually had in hand some five hundred chemises costing on the average from three to four pounds sterling each.

Her complexion and her clothes: these were the main subjects of Josephine's thoughts during those fateful weeks that Napoleon spent at Schönbrunn.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIVORCE

NAPOLEON arrived home from Vienna unexpectedly, as he had predicted, late in October, 1809. He went straight to Fontainebleau and from there sent for Josephine who was at the time at St. Cloud. Before her arrival he inspected the work he had ordered from Vienna—the wall destroying the communication between his rooms and the Empress's. Then he sat down to await her arrival, passing the time in nervous peering at his watch and in a fiery argument with Fouché and Cambacères over the subject of the succession.

Josephine was late—she had hardly begun her toilet when the Emperor's message had arrived. When at last she appeared Napoleon pretended to be immersed in work and made her delay the excuse of being cross with her, the wife he had not seen for six months. The decisive battle was at last joined.

Perhaps Josephine realized it, but she was a bad tactician in that she called up her last reserves too soon. She wept, and thereby gained a tactical victory but suffered a strategical defeat. Napoleon yielded for the time, made friends with her as he could rarely help doing at sight of her tears, and was successful in appearing amiable for the rest of the

evening. It was only that night that Josephine found out about the new wall. None of the officials of the palace could give a satisfactory explanation for it, and it at last came to her that Napoleon had nerved himself for the decisive step. We know nothing about the tears she shed that night alone.

When the Court returned to the Tuileries gossip flew like wildfire. Everyone was certain about the great event at last. Those of the Josephine faction were cursing their lack of judgment. Those opposed to her—the Bonapartes, for instance—were wild with delight. Through it all the Imperial pair passed striving to show no emotion. It was a season of festivities, and “the Emperor commanded them to be amused” as Talleyrand said. The anniversary of the coronation and of Austerlitz had to be observed. There were Kings and Princes from all over Europe come to be entertained by the great man. Among them Josephine tried to be gay, while they tried to estimate by the redness of her eyes which way the struggle was swaying.

There was more than fortunes at stake. If the divorce should really take place, then Napoleon might next marry a Princess from any one of the families there represented, and that might mean an enormous accession of power to the one favoured. Kingdoms were in his gift. A word from him would set any one of those grasping princes far above the men who now went in to dinner a dozen places before him, and might set a crown upon his head and a sceptre in his hand and entitle him to all the dearly loved mummary of curtsies and backward walking and so on. Any one of them might benefit, and

therefore not one of them was her friend. Desertions had begun already. The Duchess de la Rochefoucauld hurriedly left Josephine's service in hopes of a position at the Court of the new Empress. Even the wretched tradespeople began to display an unwonted reluctance to grant credit.

Meanwhile the secret struggle went on. Napoleon had a more difficult situation to meet even than he had at Castiglione or Eckmühl, for now he was not sure that his will might not falter—an event that had never entered into his calculations before. He was not too sure of his position, for Alexander had made no definite promise about any of the Russian Princesses, and he was not certain that Francis of Austria would welcome him as a son-in-law.

The main factor in the situation was that he had really made up his mind to the divorce; on the other occasions he had merely dallied with it, and Josephine had been able to divert him from the half-formed project. Now he had come to look upon it as essential to his Empire, and that was sufficient in itself to fix his intention practically irrevocably upon it. Whether it was so or not is a highly debatable point. When an Emperor is Emperor by virtue of the devotion of five hundred thousand soldiers he ought not need any other prop, and time was to prove that while his army remained faithful his seat on the throne was perfectly secure. But Napoleon did not foresee a severe military defeat within the next three years, and he must have realized that a series of defeats would ruin him in the eyes of his army (and thus in the eyes of France) whomever he had for a

wife. An Imperial Princess as the mother of his son would mean that his son had a fair chance of retaining the throne that Napoleon hoped to leave him. At times when the self-deception which so frequently misled him in late years was absent he realized that no other son or heir of his would ever do so. And Napoleon was passionately desirous of founding a dynasty. To gratify this passion he had to have an heir, and that heir had to be his own son born either of Josephine or of some princess of the very highest degree.

Next of the factors that influenced him was the curious little vein of snobbery that was often in evidence in his character. It seemed to him that a marriage with a Hapsburg or a Romanoff was a most eminently desirable thing, just as he preferred to call Davout le Maréchal Prince d'Eckmühl, Duc d'Auërstädt, Grand Aigle de la Légion d'Honneur, or for that matter, just as he preferred being Emperor of the French and King of Italy to being Citizen Bonaparte.

There may have been another factor. Josephine was growing old and was losing her good looks. She was forty-six, and he was only forty. She was undoubtedly tiresome in her habits of expenditure and in her constant jealousy of him. A wife born in the purple would submit in more docile fashion to the restraints of the Imperial position. He would be enabled to be unfaithful to her more comfortably. And he really might be excused if Josephine's dull affection for him had begun to bore him to distraction.

Nevertheless there were certain salient features on the other side of the medal, some of which even

Napoleon did not fully appreciate. To divorce Josephine, after the romantic nature of their marriage had been carefully stressed for years for propagandist purposes and to conceal the suspicious character of her past, would be displeasing to the sentimentalists, and there were more sentimentalists in France than Napoleon allowed for. Besides, there were many sincere Catholics in France as well, to whom the idea of divorce was abhorrent.

Next, the presence of an heir to the throne might be a disadvantage as well as an advantage. Europe might submit to his domination as long as it appeared likely that that domination would only endure for his lifetime, but it would not be so submissive if there was a chance of a long line of Napoleons succeeding him.

Then he had to consider the question as to with which House he was to enter into alliance by marriage. For the ones not so favoured would be exceedingly jealous. There had been so much rearrangement of the map lately that the casual transfer of a province or two had become almost habitual to him, and following his marriage the other States might well expect him to compensate his new relations-in-law at their expense. It was desirable, therefore, for him to marry into the most powerful, and this was without doubt Russia. It would be as well for Napoleon to make sure of the Russian marriage before taking any definite step. He had done his best, but Alexander had declined to discuss the matter as long as the divorce remained unaccomplished, and in face of this reasonable objection Napoleon had had to give way. When, after the

divorce, Alexander refused to give him one of his sisters, Napoleon did the next best thing and married a daughter of the Emperor of Austria, but he was to find in 1812 that this necessarily meant that he had to fight Russia, and Russia was to defeat him, which was more than Austria was ever able to do.

More personal objections could be swept aside. Josephine did not want to be divorced, but the man who had sent Augereau's corps forward to destruction at Eylau, and who could watch unmoved the deaths of a hundred thousand men, could not allow himself to be influenced by the likes and dislikes of a single woman. That would be too absurd.

It was more to the point to consider his own feelings in the matter. There is no doubt that Napoleon was genuinely fond of Josephine at this time, but it was a very mild fondness. Of love in its best sense he had no conception, nor could he ever have. He cared for Josephine much as he might have cared for a rather tiresome and wayward foster-child. His affection would not deter him in the least. There was always the chance, however, that she might work upon his softer feelings in the way experience had taught her, just as she had done in 1799 on his return from Egypt. If Napoleon ever troubled to analyse this effect she had on him he would have stigmatized and condemned it as mere hysteria, and indeed it was little different from hysteria. But still, it was a possible menace to the scheme, and Napoleon had to take precautions against it. That was why the wall was built dividing their apartments at Fontainebleau, and why he was now at such pains never to see her when he could

help it without a third person being present. Even then there were times when he wavered, when he protested sentimentally that he could never give her up. But they soon passed. None of Napoleon's emotions, save his hatred of idleness, was very strong. His mind was made up to the divorce, and nothing less would content him.

It was primarily essential to find out what Josephine intended to do in the matter. Should she raise any active and public opposition it might be most inconvenient. Napoleon realized that in this case the sentimentalists would be stimulated into disapproval. He hated having scandals in his family, and he shrank from having to divorce Josephine in the face of a public statement that she disagreed. In fact, if she declined to countenance the proceedings, the divorce might be difficult of arrangement. It would at least involve a great deal of discussion, and discussion in public was the last thing he wanted. Josephine had a strong position if she chose to make most use of it.

She had further strengthened it that terrible day just before the coronation when she had contrived to make the Pope insist on their marriage. Pius was not the man to break a marriage he himself had brought about, and Napoleon could not hope for a Papal dispensation on any account. Furthermore, he was on the very worst of terms with Pius owing to his annexation of the Papal States. Napoleon might even have given back some of them in exchange for spiritual countenance of the divorce, but Pius refused the bribe. During his twenty years of public life Napoleon came into contact with a less

number of men who placed their duty higher than their profit. Pius was one of them. The son of the woman he was divorcing was another.

However, in submitting to the ceremony of marriage in 1804, Napoleon, wittingly or unwittingly, had left himself a tiny loophole, of which he was now able to take advantage. The parish priest had not been present, and the marriage was, therefore, by the law of the French Church, void. In this matter the French Church set itself above the Pope, who had instigated the ceremony, above one of his Cardinals, who had performed it, and above the Catholic Church, which had made no rule about any particular priest having to be present.

The civil recognition of the marriage was no obstacle. The Code Napoleon made provision for divorce. A year before Napoleon had insisted upon the inclusion of these clauses when the Code was brought into force in Murat's kingdom of Naples, compelling the unfortunate Murat to force divorce down the throats of his priest-ridden subjects at the point of French bayonets. This insistence of Napoleon's was now explained.

The main step now was to obtain Josephine's acquiescence in the divorce. It meant an interview of which Napoleon was frankly fearful. He flinched from it for several days, but at last he nerved himself for it. He could, and did, offer much in exchange. He brusquely opened the bargaining with an offer of a principality in Italy, with its capital at Rome, and precedence over most of the other Napoleonides.

But for Josephine principalities had small attraction. What she wanted most of all in this

world was Napoleon's love, and now it was evident that this was to be withheld from her. Exile in Rome, even with a mockery of sovereignty, would be hateful to her. She hardly cared what happened to her once she was sure that Napoleon's love for her was dead, but even then she did not want to be too far away from him. She refused the bribe of Rome, and left it to be conferred as a Kingdom upon Napoleon's son by his next wife.

What Napoleon did next is a matter for conjecture only. But there is a good deal of evidence available from which one can draw conclusions. It seems certain that Napoleon turned to a means at hand whose employment stamps him as being utterly wanting in decent instincts. He was, too. Patriotism and love and disinterestedness were beyond the pale of his personal knowledge and were set down in his mind as the results of hysteria. He proceeded to a most ungentlemanly course of action, though perhaps he excused it to himself on the grounds that Josephine had to be divorced, and any means could be employed which would save her her self-respect. He proceeded to woo her all over again and to wake into new life her middle-aged devotion for him. He protested that he still loved her dearly, as dearly as in those happy days before the campaign of Italy. And Josephine, poor silly woman, eagerly believed his declaration of what she most wished to believe. But, continued Napoleon, it was of vital importance to his Empire that he should marry a royal princess and have children by her. He himself loathed the idea, but he had reconciled himself to it after a terrible struggle,

Could not Josephine, out of her great love for him, do the same? Could she not sacrifice herself for her lover? Josephine broke down under the strain and consented through her tears.

Napoleon had won his point, and all that remained to be done was to settle everything in as decent a manner as was possible. There was a family conclave held. It was decided that in exchange for her compliance Josephine was to have the highest honours possible. She must remain Empress and Queen in name, and continue to enjoy (if she could enjoy such bitter mockery) all the Imperial honours. She was to have an enormous income. The State would allow her two million francs a year, and Napoleon would give her another million from his Civil List. Malmaison would be hers, and the Élysée in Paris, and the château of Navarre. Josephine accepted all this dumbly. The only request she made was for the Crown of Italy for Eugène, and that Eugène refused before it was offered, for he would not have people saying that it was a bribe to obtain his agreement to his mother's divorce.

All was now arranged, save for the inevitable public announcement. The Legislative body was informed that Napoleon was sacrificing his dearest affections for the sake of France.

Then a Family Council was summoned, consisting of all the available Bonapartes, with Eugène and Hortense (whose dearest wish in life was to be divorced by her husband) to leaven the lump. Cambacères, the Arch-Chancellor, came to act as master of the ceremonies. The family were ushered

with pomp into the Emperor's room. Even now they could not dispense with all the ridiculous forms which obliged some of the brothers and sisters to have chairs and others stools, because Napoleon had made some Kings and some Princes. When all was duly ordered, and the laws of precedence had been observed, Napoleon made a speech. It was the inevitable speech, written with one eye on posterity. Its style was, in fact, exactly like those bulletins of Napoleon's which had caused the expression "to lie like a bulletin" to become proverbial.

Now it was the turn of Josephine. Her speech, too, had been composed for her. Once again the bulletin style emerged. It was a sentimental appeal to an hysterical public. In it Josephine was made to say that the step in contemplation was made with her full consent, and that she still loved him, that she knew he still loved her, and that she owed everything to him. Barras might have told a different story. But half-way through this wretched farce Josephine broke down. She could not continue the pompous wording. Choked with sobs, she handed the paper to Cambacères' assistant, who finished the reading for her. It doubtless sounded as well from him.

The deed was done, and now everybody concerned signed their names to the report drawn up for the benefit of the Senate, and the meeting broke up. Josephine's five years as Empress were over.

There are pathetic stories told of how that night—the last she spent at the Tuileries—she came into Napoleon's room and wept bitterly, while the Emperor mingled his tears with hers. Napoleon may have wept. He may even have meant it, in the same

fashion as he meant the passionate letters he wrote during the campaign of Italy. But even to his mind a few tears were a small price to pay for the privilege of marriage with a woman who could claim an Emperor for her father.

Next day Josephine drove out of the Tuileries to Malmaison. Napoleon took the precaution of having his secretary, Meneval, with him when he said good-bye to her, but not even his presence prevented a painful scene. Josephine fainted, and Napoleon handed her over to Meneval and hurried out of the room. When Josephine recovered, she passed down the halls; the thirty footmen in the ante-room sprang to life and rolled out the red carpet; the picket of Chasseurs of the Guard came to attention; and the Empress-Queen-Dowager was assisted by her pages into her carriage and drove off.

Her life as Empress had been full of contradictions. While the constitution had allowed her no place therein the fiercest constitutional struggles of all that took place under the Empire had been waged about her position. The influence that many people believed her to have over the Emperor was nonexistent. Yet her influence over international politics, wherein she was supposed to be only a cipher, was considerable. She had taken a leading part in the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine, and therefore it had been she who had raised the Bavarian battalions which had made possible the victories of Eckmühl and Wagram, and therefore the annexation of the Austrian littoral and the close approach to perfection of the Continental System. The abdications at Bayonne had been largely her work. The

Peninsular War had been brought about by her agency. It had been she, no less than Napoleon, who had sent Dupont forward to his destruction at Baylen, and who had sent the Red Lancers of the Guard charging through the hail of grape from the batteries at the Somesierra. Perhaps some old stalwart of the line, crucified head downwards by maddened Spanish peasants, or some eighteen-year-old conscript shrieking in agony as the field-surgeons applied the hot irons to the stump of his leg, might have found some consolation in the fact that their sufferings were caused by the action of a lady. It is of course possible, but no one could call it probable.

But the Peninsular War was Napoleon's fault. No one could say that Josephine had urged him to the conquest of Spain. Still less could anyone say that she had urged him to the divorce, and it was these two that ruined him. For Alexander of Russia, as soon as the divorce had been accomplished, declined the double-edged honour of a marriage alliance with the parvenu Emperor, and Napoleon partly to save his face, and partly as it was the next best thing to do, took as his wife Marie Louise of Austria—just what Metternich had been scheming for. It was an act which lost him the already half-hearted support of the Republicans, and the birth of an heir next lost him the support of his vassals. But Napoleon believed that the support of his Imperial father-in-law counterbalanced this, and so it might have done had he ever received it, but as it happened he never did. Metternich had lured him into a position of false confidence, and he took full advantage of it later. Lured forward by his belief in the per-

petual alliance of Austria, Napoleon plunged into his attack on Russia, and the Grand Army left its bones scattered over the comfortless plains. Next year Prussia turned against him, but Napoleon rallied his waning forces and beat the allied armies opposed to him. With Austria as his friend victory and Continental ascendancy were still his; with Austria as a neutral he could still retain much of what he had won. As the husband of one of her Princesses he believed that he could count at least on the latter, and Metternich encouraged him in the belief. After the battle of Bautzen, when Russians and Prussians were alike on the verge of ruin, Metternich came forward with an offer of mediation. The armistice of Pleisswitz was arranged in the nick of time to save them. For six weeks Napoleon remained idle, relying on Metternich's half promise of support, and during those six weeks recruits swelled the ranks of the Prussians; Bernadotte brought his Swedes up to assist in the protection of Berlin; fresh divisions came marching across Poland to join the Russian army, while the Austrian army was slowly but steadily preparing for active service, helped by the secret subsidies of England.

Confident that Austria's preparations were intended to assist him in crushing his enemies and to secure the splendid bribe of Silesia which he had offered, Napoleon abated none of his demands. That was all the pretext that Metternich wanted, and Napoleon was coolly informed that as Austria could see no hope of a permanent peace on his terms she was going to turn her arms against him to ensure peace on her own. Good luck saved the Austrian

army from just retribution after its defeat at Dresden, and the utter disaster of Leipzig followed.

Napoleon made offer after offer of terms subsequently, but each was just too exacting. And they were so exacting because Napoleon was guided into making them by his belief in the friendship of Austria. What Metternich wanted was for him to put his demands too high to be gratified. So the war went on, and the French fell back from the Elbe to the Rhine, and from the Rhine to the Marne, until at last he bowed to the overwhelming force opposed to him and abdicated. He had fallen, and Metternich had achieved the object he had set for himself nine years before. Largely it was the fault of the Austrian marriage. That was why Napoleon alluded to it later as "an abyss covered with flowers."

The son he had so longed for, and who had been at length granted him, never reigned. By the irony of fate it was the grandchild of Josephine, who had none of Napoleon's blood in his veins, who was next to bear the proud title of Emperor of the French. The dynasty, which was the object of Napoleon's greatest ambition, was not the result of the divorce at all. It would have held the throne even if Napoleon had never married Marie Louise. The present heir to the Bonaparte name claims descent from Jerome. Yet there are many people at present living who can claim descent from Marie Louise, and in the engendering of whose ancestors Napoleon had no part. They were instead the fruit of Marie Louise's adultery with one of the minions of Metternich the unrelenting.

But Josephine was not to know of this. She was

not to know that the next Emperor of the French was to be, not the little son of the woman who had supplanted her, but instead the son of her daughter Hortense, whom she spoilt in real grandmotherly fashion at every opportunity. She must have loved her husband dearly enough, for she gave him up when she might, had she struggled openly, have retained him. Her submission to her husband's wishes was the crowning act of her life. It may, after all, have aided in his ambition to found a dynasty, for the sentimental associations of the divorce increased to some extent the interest of France in the romantic side of the period, and thus helped in the formation of the legend that was to set Napoleon III on the throne. And it altered public opinion of her, which would otherwise have become fixed in its conception of her as a spendthrift nobody, so that she is looked upon with kinder eyes. Her divorce meant that more books would be written about her than would otherwise have been the case. But even if Josephine foresaw this, it is most unlikely that she would have thought it worth it.

CHAPTER XIV

JOSEPHINE'S CHILDREN

IT is a curious fact that of Alexandre de Beauharnais' children, the one on whose paternity he cast no doubts should be most unlike him, while the other, whom he denied having fathered, should closely resemble him in character.

The latter was Hortense, conceived during a casual reconciliation, born in unhappiness, educated with difficulty, the daughter of a Constitutionalist and an Empress, the wife of a Revolutionary and a King, and the mother of an Emperor and of a bastard.

She is little heard of during the days before the appearance of Bonaparte. We find her, although only a child, signing a petition on behalf of her parents along with Eugène when Josephine and Beauharnais were in prison, but the petition was drawn up at Josephine's instigation by a friend of hers, for both Hortense and Eugène were too young to have been able to do anything like that on their own initiative. Hortense lived on charity while her mother was in Les Carmes, and when Josephine regained her freedom she lived on what some people have called by a worse name, for Josephine sent her to Mme. Campan's school, paying the fees by methods which one has to call doubtful. The fees

were high, too, for the competition for admission was great. Mme. Campan had been a very great lady under the Bourbon régime, and all the successful army contractors and politicians wanted their children to receive the polish of the old aristocracy. All the children of the great therefore congregated thither, and somehow Josephine contrived to send Hortense. The fees, presumably, came out of the pockets of Barras or of some of the trusting souls who lent Josephine money. To have a daughter at Mme. Campan's was a social asset, which was presumably why Josephine sent Hortense there. It also kept her conveniently out of the way while Josephine earned their combined livings.

At Mme. Campan's Hortense learned all the little accomplishments that she was to carry through life. She could paint a little, dance a little, play a little, more than a little. What with her training and her mother's exquisite example she had perfect manners when she chose to show them. Altogether she was quite a charming stepdaughter of thirteen for the young general of twenty-six who married her mother.

Later at Mme. Campan's she had schoolfellows of all ranks and of varying destinies. One of them was much younger than she and bore her name. This was Stéphanie de Beauharnais, later to be Grand Duchess of Baden. Another, almost her own age, bore to her the complicated relationship of step-aunt by marriage. She was destined to be Queen of Naples, and to become Hortense's sister-in-law—a much more intelligible connection. Some of her schoolfellows later were her Ladies of Honour when she became a

Queen, others were Ladies of Honour to Bourbon princesses.

When Napoleon returned from Egypt Hortense was of age to leave school, and was also of full marriageable age according to the standards of that time. But there were difficulties. It was not easy to arrange the marriage of the stepdaughter of a man of somewhat insecure position who was nevertheless a semi-royalty, especially when the tie between her mother and her stepfather was obviously insecure. Hortense remained unmarried, and her terrible parent frightened her from flirting. She remained merely her mother's daughter, without any other distinction, unlike Napoleon's sisters, who built themselves up reputations in a surprisingly short time.

The jars and wranglings of Napoleon's family life closely affected her. Her position depended on her mother's, and it is not surprising to find her ranged against the Bonapartes, and breaking lances at intervals with Caroline and Lucien, and even at times daring the wrath of the grim Mme. Bonaparte herself. It was an unbearable situation, and when Josephine arranged, as has already been described, a marriage between her and Louis Bonaparte, Hortense was relieved enough to accept.

Did she marry anyone not of the Bonaparte family she lost all the advantage of her connection with the great man. If she had waited, Napoleon might have found a prince for her, as he did for some of her cousins, but she could not foresee the day when this would not only be possible but necessary to him. Louis Bonaparte was the best match open to her,

and the marriage carried with it the comforting knowledge that whether the Bonapartes were successful in their feud with Josephine, or whether Josephine was successful over the Bonapartes, she was safe. And she was also influenced by the fact that her marriage might heal the feud.

The match was undoubtedly promising. Louis had shown signs of talent, and his casual adventures with women were far less notorious than were those of his brothers. He was handsome, and he had artistic tastes. But he made a hopeless husband. To begin with, he was frantically jealous, largely as a result of rumours that one of his rivals was Napoleon himself. Then he began to take an overwhelming interest in his health, with the result that in a few years he became a confirmed hypochondriac. He was both mean and selfish, and to crown it all he was incapable of fulfilling all the tasks set him by his brother. Four years after his marriage he received the throne of Holland, but he was unable to reconcile the demands made by his brother with his royal conscience. Trade with England was essential to the well-being of the Netherlands, and trade with England was anathema to the Emperor of the French. Louis, as was to be expected, tried to steer a middle course. He connived at smuggling on the part of his subjects, while at the same time he assured Napoleon that there was no smuggling going on in his dominions. Once or twice he made half-hearted attempts to resist his brother's demands, but his nerve failed him. He led a pitiful life, as King over some millions of sullenly obstinate subjects, quarrelling perennially with his wife, bullied by his brother,

frightened nearly to death about his health, and occasionally experiencing additional scares on the occasions when a British landing was threatened or carried out. He can hardly be blamed for considering that even a kingdom, the position of Grand Constable of the Empire of the French, and a beautiful and talented wife did not compensate him for his unhappiness. Hortense began to give him real cause for jealousy. He had grounds for suspecting her relations with an Admiral of the Dutch fleet (which Camperdown and twenty years of attrition had reduced to the proportions of the Swiss Navy); with one or two of the men about his Court, and with the Comte de Flahault, an aristocrat of somewhat doubtful parentage. The death of his son Napoleon Charles deprived him of hope for the Regency after the death of Napoleon. Then came the worst blow of all. Napoleon had decided that the Dutch Customs would be better supervised by French officials than by those of the Kingdom of Holland. Accordingly he sent a division of French troops with orders to take possession of Amsterdam and other places. The Dutch troops could do nothing less than resist this astounding invasion while awaiting orders from Louis. Shots were actually exchanged between the allied armies. To Louis the news came as the last straw. He could not possibly resist Napoleon by main force, and he could not tolerate the presence of a foreign army in his dominions. He was perhaps more relieved than otherwise. He hurriedly abdicated, and fled from Holland before his brother could lay hold of him to place some new burden on his shoulders. He fled

faster than his brother's messages could follow, and he never stopped until he was safe in the dominions of the Emperor of Austria, and from then onwards neither threats nor promises availed to lure him forth. Holland was promptly annexed to France, and Hortense returned with relief to Paris. Her eldest surviving son did not even receive the titular dignity of King of Holland. He had been given Murat's Grand Duchy of Berg when that individual passed on to Naples, and Grand Duke of Berg he remained, at the mature age of six, having never set foot in his Grand Duchy, and never receiving a penny of its revenues.

In Paris Hortense enjoyed herself immensely. She intended never to set eyes on her husband again, and Flahault was promoted to the advantages that Louis had forsaken, without very much ceremony. She was very happy, and not even the birth of a child robbed her of the advantages of her position. She stayed by Josephine to the end, and later lived in Switzerland and Italy and France in great comfort. But the end of her life was disturbed by the death of Napoleon Louis during the Italian rising of 1831, and she did not live to see her other legitimate son, Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French. So she was also deprived of the pleasure of hearing one of her musical compositions, "*Partant pour la Syrie*," played as the national anthem of the Second Empire.

Her brother Eugène played a nobler part in history. He governed his viceroyalty of Italy wisely and well, so wisely, in fact, that he managed to reconcile the Italians to the expenditure of all the Italian revenue upon French aims, and to the spilling

of Italian blood for purposes solely French in Spain and Germany and Russia and Austria. When, after the fall of the Empire, the Austrians ruled the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia it was frequently noticed that the people who bought complete editions of Alfieri, and who did other enlightened things, were invariably men who had held public positions under Eugène.

His marriage to Augusta of Bavaria, surprisingly enough, was a great success. He was married to her a week after meeting her for the first time, and spent his honeymoon hurrying back to Milan to resume control of Italy, but the two lived in perfect harmony through good times and bad all their lives. She bore him seven children, and the six who survived all had distinguished careers. The most singular side of the question is how Josephine and Alexandre de Beauharnais contrived between them to have such a son.

Militarily his life was as creditable though not so successful. He held his first command in the field before he was thirty, with only the Syrian campaign as the sum of his military experience, but he came through the ordeal in distinguished fashion. The Austrians made a fierce invasion of Italy at the opening of the war of 1809, and Eugène was compelled to retreat before it to the Mincio. Here reinforcements awaited him, and in turn the Austrians had to retreat. Eugène followed them up, and made a skilful junction with Marmont and the Army of Illyria. Then came the news of the defeat of Napoleon at Aspern, and every man was needed with extreme urgency at Vienna. Eugène flung

himself upon the Austrians, and routed them at Austerlitz. Wheeling aside, he marched desperately on Vienna, arriving at the nick of time. At midnight on the day of his arrival the Army of Italy crossed the Danube by the bridges already prepared, and the next day began the battle of Wagram. It ended after forty-eight hours later, and the credit for the victory, after Davout, lay with Eugène and his Italians. The desperate need for promptitude on Eugène's part during the march to Vienna was demonstrated by the arrival near the field at the close of the action of his late opponents, who might well have turned the scale had they come three hours earlier. Eugène had had a hand in saving an Empire.

Rewards came his way in the profusion characteristic of the Empire. He was made Prince of Venice, and, after the divorce, he was promised the succession to the crown of Italy. True, Princes and Dukes were three-a-penny at the Court of Napoleon, as at that of King Goldenheart, and he would only obtain the throne of Italy after Napoleon's death by fighting for it if at all, but Eugène was one of those men (there were not more than half a dozen notable ones during the period) to whom the knowledge that they have done their duty is the greatest reward they can imagine. His letters go to prove it, and his actions supply a confirmation which is woefully lacking in the case of some other men for whom the same claim has been made.

Eugène remained undisturbed in his rule of Italy for the next three years, save for the necessity of journeying to Paris to witness the divorce of his mother and the remarriage of his stepfather. Then

came the summons to bring the flower of the Italian army to fight in Russia to help decide the question as to whether or not the Russians were to obey the command of the ruler of France and close their ports to the trade of England. The Italians died in thousands on the barren plains of Lithuania and White Russia. Eugène himself went short on occasions of the necessities of life. The battle of Borodino took fearful toll of the wasted regiments. When at last the Italians entered Moscow hardly half the places in the ranks were filled. Nevertheless, when the retreat began the Italians were the most trustworthy part of the army, and it was to them that Napoleon delegated the task of clearing the way when the Russians opposed him at Malo-Jaroslavetz. That they failed was neither their fault nor Eugène's. Exhausted by privation and disease they could not be expected to force a position held by superior numbers of the stubbornest infantry on the Continent. The Italians fell back, and the army began its weary march through the districts laid waste in its advance.

At Smorgoni Napoleon left them. He could do nothing with such a rabble, and his presence was urgently needed in Paris. Murat succeeded to the command. He held it for a few days, until the army reached the Oder, and then his nerve failed. He made use of the excuse of weaklings all the world over and said he was ill. Having thrown up his command on account of this illness he travelled in the depth of winter from Posen to Naples, taking only a fortnight on the journey, despite having to leave one carriage buried in snow on the Alps. All that was

the matter with him was that he wanted to make sure of his Kingdom of Naples.

Eugène succeeded Murat. With the aid of Ney and the other stalwarts of the retreat he managed to pull the remains of the army together, despite the defection of the Prussians and the active enmity of the whole countryside. He held his fragmentary force together on its slow retreat before the exultant Russians from the Oder to the Elbe, and then Napoleon came pressing forward to his relief with a new army of three hundred thousand men that Eugène's doggedness had given him time to raise. At the battles that followed, Bautzen and Lutzen, Eugène fought gallantly and successfully. At Bautzen the wretched Italians died in thousands while the holding attack was being made which kept the allies pinned to their position and while Ney was wheeling sixty thousand men against their flank. Their efforts and self-sacrifice were wasted through Ney's negligence in being drawn into the attack at Priestitz, and the battle ended in the orderly retreat of the allies. Then Eugène was sent back to Italy to hold his viceroyalty against the Austrians whom Metternich was sending against it.

It was the least successful and the most brilliant period of his life. The fortunes of Europe were swaying in the scale, and a touch would turn the balance. To Eugène came the most tempting offers. If he would betray his trust the Austrians would confirm him in his Kingdom of Italy, or, failing that, would see that the Grand Duchy of Frankfort, to which he held the reversion by Napoleon's arrangement, was much enlarged. It would be easy enough

for Eugène to lead his Italians against Napoleon, for they were weary to death of French domination, but he threw all his weight against it. The Italians followed his example, and struggled on despite the overwhelming numbers opposed to them. Russians and Prussians and English and Austrians were in France, and the Empire was tottering to its fall. A word from Eugène would have made certain the ruin of the man who divorced his mother, by opening the southern passes to a new invader, and would have secured a kingdom of two millions of subjects for himself. That word he refused to give. He struggled on, wheeling time and again with his hard-pressed forces as he fell back up the valley of the Po, gaining little victories over the hordes of Croats and Hungarians who pursued him, until his enemies despaired of success. But the diplomacy of Metternich won for them the victory that their arms could not achieve. The same glittering offers were made to Murat in Naples as had been made to Eugène. Murat yielded, and turned against his Imperial benefactor. He led forty thousand Neapolitans northward, and delivered all Italy over to the Austrians. Then the Empire fell, and Eugène was free to return to France, just in time to see his mother on her deathbed.

With Napoleon's fall Eugène's public career came to an end. He took refuge in the domains of his father-in-law, the King of Bavaria. To the King he passed his word that he would give no further help to Napoleon, and this promise prevented him from joining the Emperor during the Hundred Days. Eugène's promises were made to be kept.

Everybody liked him, even his late enemies, the Austrians. The Congress of Vienna tried to find a sovereignty for him, and even offered him Bernadotte's old principality of Ponte Corvo, but the offer was made conditional upon Eugène's only living there when the Emperor of Austria permitted it, and he declined. In the end Maximilian Joseph of Bavaria carved a small principality out of his own dominions, and Eugène became Prince of Eichstadt.

In Bavaria Eugène spent the tranquil remainder of his life. His children all made successful marriages, and he himself was honoured by all the rulers of Europe. His name has become traditional for all that the term "honourable" implies.

He had succeeded in doing in Italy during the reign of the Emperor what even Davout did not succeed so completely in doing in the north, and what none of the marshals succeeded in doing in Spain. He reconciled the Italians to the domination of France, and he kept that country loyal to the end. Had there been another like him and Davout for service in Spain the Peninsular War would not have been so disastrous for France; Napoleon might even have retained his throne for a few more precarious years.

The descendants of Josephine in the next generation were widely scattered. One of them, the sole surviving legitimate son of Hortense, wore the uneasy crown of the Empire of the French. And *his* only son died fighting for the English in Africa. Hortense's other child, whose father was the Comte de Flahault, became under the Second Empire the Duc de Morny and the mightiest nabob of all the

strange crew that surrounded Napoleon III. He had helped in the *Coup d'État*, and for his reward he became a Minister, an Ambassador, and was given opportunities to fill his pockets in profitable speculations. His son had the decidedly rare honour of marrying a daughter of a President of Venezuela, and the family is still enduring, although it does not now sport on its coat of arms the Hortensia flower that the first de Morny chose as a tribute in delicate taste to his mother.

In the male line the family of Beauharnais has attained to amazing heights. Eugène's eldest son became the consort of the Queen of Portugal, but unfortunately died two months after his marriage. His other son had better fortune, for he married a daughter of the Czar of Russia, and became an Imperial Prince of the family of Romanoff by the ukase of that potentate. Even nowadays there are plenty of Grand Dukes who trace (or who could trace, if they wished to do so) their descent from the little Creole girl of Martinique and her first husband. The four daughters all married into royal families. The greatest catch of all, perhaps, was when the eldest married Oscar, Crown Prince of Sweden and Norway. He was the son of that Bernadotte who had started life as a lawyer's clerk in Gascony, and who had climbed to the command of a division during the French Revolutionary wars. He had plotted the same treachery to the government as did Bonaparte, but less successfully. A marriage to one of Bonaparte's old sweethearts, Désirée Clary, who was incidentally the sister-in-law of Joseph Bonaparte, had brought him security of position under the Empire,

and also gave him the principality of Ponte Corvo. The deposition of the last Vasa king but one of Sweden gave him a further opportunity, for the Swedes elected him heir to the throne. In this capacity he fought against his old benefactor at Dennewitz and Leipzig, and obtained the addition of Norway to his kingdom as a reward. It was only suspected, not proved, that the reason of his dilatoriness at these two battles, which nearly ruined the Allied cause, was because he was scheming to obtain the crown of France after Napoleon's fall.

Yet he found this suspicion inconvenient, for when his son Oscar, Napoleon's godson, became of marriageable years, none of the royal houses of Europe would find a wife for him. Europe was in the grip of the Holy Alliance, and anything that recalled the days of the Napoleonic régime was abhorrent to them. Even minor states like Mecklenburg turned up their noses at a marriage alliance with the royal family of Sweden, and Bernadotte, Charles XIV of Sweden and Norway, was at his wits' end to know what to do. Eventually Eugène's daughter filled the gap, and became, in the fullness of time, Queen of Sweden, and ancestress of the present King. Since that time it has not been so difficult for the house of Bernadotte to find brides for its sons, and during the present century one of them was the husband of a lady who had not very many lives between her and the Throne of All the Britains.

After the alliance with Sweden and the promotion of one of the sons to Imperial rank in Russia the other daughters made good marriages. In fact, at one time the Beauharnais family bade fair to occupy the

position subsequently filled in the Almanachs by the House of Coburg. Amélie de Beauharnais became Empress of Brazil, and her sisters became Princess Frederick of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Princess William of Wurtemberg. By now the family of Josephine is firmly implanted among the great. More than one King in Europe (and kings who retain their thrones, for that matter) numbers Josephine among his great-grandmothers or great-great-grandmothers. This is perhaps not so amusing as the fact that for every fraction of Josephine's blood that they can boast they must have inevitably the same proportion of Alexandre de Beauharnais'. And Alexandre is not an ancestor to be proud of. He was not even of Imperial rank. Even the fact that he met the same death as did Louis XVI is discounted by the fact that Robespierre died in the same way also.

The legitimate descent of Napoleon was extinct by 1832; that of Josephine flourishes like the green bay tree, wears crowns and calls kings "cousin," and pays unearned income tax, and will doubtless continue to flourish when crowns and kings and unearned incomes have all gone the way to which they are apparently tending.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST CHAPTER

JOSEPHINE was a divorced woman, a pensioner on her late husband, with nothing before her save the life of the gilded cage where even the gilt was a polite fiction like that which had divorced her. She had found the life of a real Empress dull enough; she found the life of a courtesy Empress, without even the patronage and the occasional excursions into politics of her former existence, quite unbearable.

There is one analogy which strikes one at the outset, on reading of Josephine's life at Malmaison, and that is that Malmaison was a veritable St. Helena. There were the same passionate boredom, the same trivial squabbings, the same glances back over a past that now seemed such centuries away. At St. Helena Bertrand and Montholon and the others were vilely jealous of the Emperor's favour, and an invitation from him to dine at his table was schemed for and prayed for, and when received was a cause of rejoicing to the recipient, and a cause of heart-burnings to the others. We read of exactly the same state of affairs at Malmaison. Josephine's ladies, such as remained faithful to her, were jealous of her every word. They had little else to think about. The likeness between the two periods of exile is extraordinary in other ways,

too. Josephine's shortness of money was more real but just as accentuated as was Napoleon's. The duration of the fallen royalties' exiles was the same nearly to a month. Both Josephine and Napoleon were anxious about the career of a son. Each of them pretended to a state which was farcical under the circumstances. It almost seems as if St. Helena was providential retribution for Malmaison. The point of difference is that Napoleon consciously worked for a legend to be attached to his name, while in the case of Josephine this grew up naturally.

In the beginning Josephine did not find life at Malmaison too painful. After fearing divorce for ten years continuously it must have been almost a relief to have the matter settled in the only way that could be possibly permanent. Then the Emperor came to visit her fairly often in the early days, and all the notabilities of the Imperial service came to pay visits of condolence. She even made a return to the high politics which had been a cause of her fall. As far as she was able she supported the cause of Marie Louise as Napoleon's next wife. This singular action—it is surely singular for a woman to recommend another for the position of wife to the man she has just left—was probably the result of her wish to remain as much as she could in the old world. It would be quite desirable, too, to give the new Empress cause to be grateful to her. Actuated by these two motives she urged the Austrian alliance upon Napoleon, and even acted as a sort of unofficial ambassador in negotiations with Mme. Metternich. Eugène, at her command, did the same with the new Austrian Ambassador, Schwartzenburg.

But when the divorce had become a stale topic of conversation with everyone, and the Austrian marriage was an accomplished fact, and her late husband began to drop the tenderness from his letters, the bitterness of her position was forced home to her. Her château of Navarre she found as unfit for residence as did Napoleon Longwood. To set it in order would cost money, much money, and, as usual, money was scarce with her. At the time of the divorce Napoleon had advanced enough of the allowance he had promised her to pay off her debts, but she had to repay this loan during the next two years. The deduction brought about financial difficulties faster even than had been expected, and soon she was appealing for help in quite the old style. It was granted her, and a great deal of money was spent on Navarre, but it never became a comfortable place to live in. Malmaison was always her favourite, haunted though it was by memories of Napoleon (perhaps even by memories of Barras and Hippolyte Charles as well) and there, in her beloved gardens and hot-houses, she spent much of her time. Malmaison soon became a haven of refuge for the unhappily married. Thither came Hortense, free from her husband and a little weary of the reaction following his departure. Then there was the Princess d'Arenberg, half crazed by the mad cruelty of her husband. She, too, was a blood relation, for before her marriage she had been a Tascher, and her union with d'Arenberg was Josephine's work. It was a strange, fantastic life they all led. The morning was, happily, consumed by Josephine's toilet, but the afternoons and the evenings passed with wearisome

slowness. The meals were served with great state to help pass the time, and the intervals were filled with very occasional drives, or with tentative billiards or with interminable games of backgammon with senile clerics.

Little items of news arrived now and then. Marie Louise was, it seemed, jealous of her predecessor. For a little Josephine's heart was glad, but her exultation turned to unhappiness when it became apparent that this jealousy meant that Napoleon would cease his visits and his letters. It was even rumoured in Paris that Marie Louise had tried to insist on Josephine's permanent confinement to Navarre, or else on her exile to the Grand Duchy of Berg. Rumours like these roused panic at Malmaison, and Josephine would write frantic letters to Eugène or to the Emperor to protest.

When it became certain that Marie Louise would soon become the mother of the child that Napoleon craved so earnestly Napoleon indeed took action in this direction. Josephine was to remain away from the vicinity of Paris until after the birth. Poor Josephine, mad with jealousy, wanted by some strange freak of contrariety to be near Paris instead. For a space she did indeed travel in Switzerland (where she bought the château where later Louis Napoleon lived before he became Emperor), but as the time of the birth drew near she returned to Malmaison. She announced that she would only be there for twenty-four hours, but her stay prolonged itself into three weeks, and in the end it was only a peremptory order from the Emperor through the mouth of a Grand Imperial Dignitary that at last

sent her off to Navarre. There she heard the pealing of the bells of Evreux that marked the birth of a King of Rome. Soon after arrived an Imperial messenger with a letter from the Emperor with more details, and to the messenger Josephine made the little set speech that had been long composed for the occasion and which was duly given its place in the *Moniteur*. But afterwards she wept.

Her love for Napoleon and her jealousy of Marie Louise showed itself in scores of ways. She was subject to a constant desire to meet Marie Louise face to face, and to see what her successful rival really looked like. On several occasions she implored Napoleon to arrange a meeting, and he did indeed make one or two tentative attempts to do so, but Marie Louise was so horror-struck at the bare suggestion that in the end the matter was allowed to drop. Since she could not see Marie Louise, an unofficial rival would do instead. Marie de Walewska was in Paris, and in answer to repeated invitations she visited Malmaison and brought her son, young Count Walewski, whom she had borne to Napoleon during the negotiations at Schönbrunn. Walewski and Hortense's two sons became great favourites with Josephine, and she spoiled them as far as she was allowed. Partly it was because she loved children, but mainly it was a result of the strange urgings of her jealousy.

After the birth of the King of Rome there came an uncontrollable longing to see this child for whose sake she had been abandoned before he had been even conceived. She wrote repeatedly to Napoleon about it, and in the end he gave way. Marie Louise must

not hear about it ; she would not like her child having interviews with a woman of Josephine's doubtful antecedents. So the meeting was the result apparently of an accident. Napoleon took the King of Rome driving in the Bois, and there, by the summer house of Bagatelle, the Empress who had ceased to reign met the King of Rome who would never reign. She embraced him and kissed him repeatedly—even his Hapsburg lip did not deter her. At last came tears, and she had promised Napoleon that there should be no tears. Napoleon brought the interview to an end and took his child away. Josephine never saw Napoleon again.

Trouble followed trouble with sickening regularity. Once more Josephine became burdened with debts. Navarre cost her a great deal of money, and, as ever, she spent much more than she should have done on dress and on trifles. Napoleon had feared this, and he had taken Josephine's expenses under his own charge, appointing his own accountants to look after them. Even this device failed. Credit was too readily granted to Josephine for anyone, especially a man, to oversee her employment of her income. Considering the circumstances, it would have been a greater source of wonder for Josephine not to fall in debt than for her to exceed her income as much as she did. Napoleon had to come to her rescue once again, as he had done nearly every year of their married life, and pay off her debts with his usual deductions. Money was not yet scarce. Far-seeing people might perhaps guess that the Empire was not as stable as it had been, but Germany and Poland were still under Napoleon's thumb and were

sending in the subsidies exacted from them. In fact, the Empire was even better off than usual financially, for annexation had followed annexation until France extended to the Baltic while her army, slowly massing for the campaign against Russia, was living at free quarters in Prussia and Saxony and Poland. It did not matter about Prussia's feelings. If a municipality protested that it was unable to supply rations and equipment to the huge columns continually arriving, the town was merely sacked. Only in Spain did war cost Napoleon anything, and there he never spent as much as the efficiency of his army demanded. If he had sent to Spain the millions that either Marie Louise or Josephine cost him his troops might have held that country a little longer.

As the spring of 1812 advanced the situation in the East developed rapidly. The subject monarchs were summoned to Dresden, and thither went Napoleon at the beginning of May. An Emperor and seven Kings were there to hear his commands, and there were lesser fry like Grand Dukes literally in dozens. It was a more splendid meeting even than Erfurt, where Talma had played to a parterre of kings. But the situation was very different from what it had been then. Alexander of Russia was not present. Instead he was slowly gathering his army to meet the half million enemies assembling on the Niemen. And events were to prove that Alexander was more effective as an enemy than the other monarchs were as allies. In yet another respect was Dresden different from Erfurt, for Napoleon took his wife to Dresden. Marie Louise had her train of Queens as Napoleon had his train of Kings. The dignity that

Josephine asked in vain was bestowed unasked upon Marie Louise, and she, stout, stupid, and lazy, was not of nearly as much use as Josephine would have been.

The Dresden conference ended, and Napoleon went forward to meet his destiny. Marie Louise returned to Paris to assume yet another dignity that Josephine had never been granted. In France now she was Regent—Empress, Queen, and Regent. Josephine was now her subject. It was very likely because of this that Josephine made the longest stay out of France that she had done since the Consulate.

She went first to Milan, where she stayed with her daughter-in-law, the Vicereine of Italy. Three days after her arrival the child who was later to become Empress of Brazil was born. Josephine was in ecstasies. She was very fond of children, and here were four grandchildren whom she had never seen to play with. They were none the less children because they were Highnesses, and one was Princess of Bologna and another Prince of Venice. Perhaps Josephine liked them all the better because of that. And they had been favoured by fate in that the madness that goes with the Wittelsbach blood had missed their generation.

From Milan she set out for Aix les Bains, delaying her start until Mme. Mère and Pauline Bonaparte, "the Semiramis of Italy," had left. Josephine did not court the triumphant rudenesses of the Bonaparte family. Then after Aix she went to her new château in Switzerland, and she only returned to Paris in November, 1812.

In the capital there was a very unsettled atmos-

phere prevailing. There were all sorts of rumours about the fate of the war in Russia. No official news had been published since the triumphant bulletin announcing the entry into Moscow, but hints were not lacking that all was not well. Everyone knew that Jerome Bonaparte had returned home in a fit of the sulks quite early in the campaign because of his brother's reprimands, and everyone knew that famine and plague had begun their work almost as soon as the march began. That was all, but it was enough to give hope to those who wished harm to the Emperor. The very day before Josephine arrived at Malmaison Mallet had made his daring attempt upon the Empire by means of forged senatorial decrees. Unrest was everywhere, and in Josephine the malcontents hoped to find a willing ally.

They were disappointed as far as Josephine personally was concerned. She would not plot against Napoleon, even had she thought it likely that a plot would succeed, and now she was as confident of Napoleon's ultimate victory as before she had been doubtful. But at Josephine's Court there developed a little party in opposition to the Empire. It was not surprising that Navarre and Malmaison should become the headquarters of this party, because those who adhered to Josephine were certainly opponents of Marie Louise, while in addition Josephine's liking for the Bourbon aristocracy had caused several people to enter her service who had little liking for her and none at all for Bonaparte. Thus what began to be called the "Navarre party" came to be formed. It was perfectly useless politically, of course. No one in Josephine's position or attached to her service

could do anything without it being known to the secret police, but it served later to give those who wished to defile Josephine's memory an ostensible excuse. Parisian society was fast breaking up into Bonapartists, Legitimists, and Republicans, while now the two new parties of Navarre and of Marie Louise appeared on the scene. The division meant nothing at present, nor could it mean anything as long as Napoleon had an army at his back. It was later, when the Empire had fallen, that the result of the schisms became obvious. Paris was in several minds, and could not act decisively. It could not oppose the Bourbon restoration, and Louis XVIII consequently returned to power. It took fifteen years of misgovernment to reunite temporarily the Parisian parties, but as soon as reunion was achieved the Bourbons fell once more.

At the end of the year Napoleon arrived unexpectedly in Paris. There had been no hint of his return, and his appearance took everyone by surprise. Then the publication of a bulletin, an almost truthful one, explained to some extent the magnitude of the disaster which had befallen France. Everyone gasped in astonishment. There was an immediate hint of trouble, but Napoleon's prestige was still high enough to override the mu murers. He set to work to repair the damage done.

Enough officers had returned from Russia to make it possible to form another army, and from the troops in Spain he could obtain enough veterans to weld the new force together. He could not draw on this source as extensively as he would have liked, for in Spain matters were not progressing at all favour-

ably. Marmont, whom Josephine had known as a chubby-faced artillery subaltern, distinguished himself that summer by devoting his army to utter ruin at Salamanca, and the defeat had meant not only the loss of Andalusia to France, but also increased confidence in Wellington in England so that he was being sent the men and money he needed. Napoleon drew on Spain to such an extent that a careful general, making the fullest use of his resources, and aided by good luck and great skill, might just hope to retain Spain north of the Ebro and keep Wellington out of France. But the generals he left were Jourdan and Joseph Bonaparte, and before the summer had quite ended the French had been totally routed at Vittoria and the English were in France.

But this was not yet foreseen. At present all that was realized was that Napoleon had raised a new army of three hundred thousand men, and had set it in motion into Germany to confront the Russians and the Prussians and the Swedes who were timorously awaiting his attack. Josephine, utterly ignorant of military conditions, believed that he would re-conquer Europe. She rated the Russian debacle as a less disaster than Essling, because at the time when Essling was fought she was more in the centre of things, and had dealings with the prominent men of both sides who could do something to enlighten her. Since the divorce she had been too much in the background to be possessed of any information regarding the actual trend of affairs; she was in the position of a mere spectator. She knew no more than the average citizen, and that was exceedingly little. And in addition she had that

confidence in Metternich that her late husband shared, which was to mislead him so terribly during the course of the year.

So Josephine spent the summer of 1813 in happy ignorance of Napoleon's difficulties, passing her days happily at Malmaison as usual with her flowers and her dresses, running steadily into debt, spoiling Napoleon Louis and Louis Napoleon and young Walewski whom she had to stay with her, and not taking the trouble to read between the lines of the bulletins.

Indeed, at first there seemed no cause for worry. Napoleon had passed the Elbe, had won a victory at Lutzen, had re-conquered Saxony, had won another victory at Bautzen, forcing his enemies beyond the Oder, and had then signed an armistice that seemed to the unenlightened citizens as promising as that of Znaim. Up to August all seemed well.

Then came terrible news. Joseph Bonaparte had been routed at Vittoria. Metternich had played false and had flung the armies of Austria upon Napoleon. A roaring bulletin had announced a victory at Dresden over these new foes, but along with it came whispers that Ney and Oudinot and Macdonald had all been defeated, and that Vandamme had been hemmed in and forced to surrender. The whispers were true, too, for later came the news that Napoleon had been forced back to Leipzig and had been defeated there by the massed armies of his opponents.

Jerome Bonaparte reappeared in Paris; his kingdom of Westphalia had vanished in a night—the night following Leipzig. Then came Joseph

Bonaparte, disgusted with kingship, dismissed from the army he nominally commanded, and replaced by Soult. The Bonaparte clan was re-gathering. Louis Bonaparte performed one of the few heroic acts of his life by returning from his comfortable château in Styria to be at the side of his brother in his adversity. To Josephine the news was not specially pleasing; to Hortense it was positively horrifying, for she wondered whether he would hear about Flahault and the various other men who had been unnecessarily consoling her for his absence. But in the flurry of a falling Empire Louis had no time to spare for a wife he did not love and who detested him in return. Another army had to be built up; the Vendée had to be kept quiet; Paris had to be held down; money had to be found without the aid of the German subsidies. Yet during this period Napoleon wrote to Josephine once more—almost the last letter of his to her which has been preserved. And it was about her debts.

For a little while longer Napoleon staved off what was now seen to be nearly inevitable. For two months he was in Paris, stooping to cajole the Senate, that had once been so obsequious, for supplies of men and of money. Then the Allies crossed the Rhine on to the sacred soil of France and Napoleon rushed away to head his army of eighteen-year-olds against the menace of their advance. He still had some trust in Metternich; he still could not believe that Francis of Austria would deprive his daughter of a throne by putting an end to the Empire. Josephine was of the same mind. We find her writing to Hortense admitting the necessity of the cession of

at least Italy, but without the smallest suspicion that Napoleon would be involved in the general ruin. She and her ladies busied themselves in making bandages for the wounded—just as Marie Louise and her ladies were doing at the Tuileries. Later she had a strange letter from Napoleon. The Emperor, with so many examples of treachery around him, was even doubting the constancy of Eugène. He had written to him advising the abandonment of Italy and the concentration of Eugène's army in France where he could use it against his main enemies, Schartzenburg and Blücher. Eugène had not done this, for the simple reason that his Italian troops would desert at once if they were taken out of Italy, and Napoleon asked Josephine to write to Eugène begging him to do as he was ordered, and making sure that he was still faithful to the Empire. Josephine did as she was asked, entering into questions of strategy at his bidding as though it was not the subject of which she was more ignorant than any other. She implored Eugène to abandon Italy and march across the Alps, leaving only garrisons in Mantua and the other strong places. She quoted a few words of the Emperor's letter, sufficient to show that he had given up his old style of familiarity and addressed her now in the same flamboyant terms as he used in his bulletins. Finally she proves her loyalty to the tottering Empire by her urgent recommendations of loyalty to him.

The campaign of France progressed in see-saw fashion. The Allies pushed slowly towards Paris, to be thrown back a little occasionally as the Emperor seized a chance and flung himself upon one of the

isolated divisions of the enemy. He won three victories of this sort in a week, but the stars in their courses fought against him. He was hopelessly outnumbered, and Murat's defection in the south made the Austrians sure of Italy where they could gain compensation for the cessions made by them to the lesser German States. When in 1860 Austrian influence vanished from that peninsula Metternich's statecraft was proved faulty, but at the moment the knowledge that Italy was theirs encouraged the Austrians to push on more boldly into France, and Napoleon's rule was doomed. The enemy armies pushed through to the valley of the Seine. Josephine began to see occasionally little columns of French infantry toiling past Malmaison. They were very small columns, made up of weary boys, some still in the sabots and blouses in which they had followed the plough, while some were in rags that no one would recognize for the trim blue tunics and white breeches of the infantry of the line. They had achieved as much as could be expected of human flesh and blood on twenty battlefields from Montereau to Arcis-sur-Aube, but they could do no more. They died in hundreds by the roadsides of sheer fatigue.

And somewhere close behind the trailing columns were the Cossacks, little hairy men on hairy ponies, armed with long lances, with a terrible reputation for plundering and for ferocity towards non-combatants. Josephine's ladies saw that it was time to move out of their way, and they induced her to transfer to Navarre. The most effective argument was a letter from Hortense at the Court of Marie Louise, saying that the Empress was escaping to Blois. At last it

began to dawn upon Josephine that all was lost, and she set forth from Malmaison at the end of March, with her ladies in a continual state of panic lest the dreaded lances should appear on the skyline. Once, indeed, there was a false alarm, and Josephine began to run away on foot before she could be reassured. However, the party made the two days' journey to Navarre without mishap, and there they heard of Marmont's surrender of Paris and of the entry of the allies. Next day came Hortense, tearful and frightened. She did not know what to do. She had suddenly become afraid lest her husband Louis should try to make her join him again, and that was a prospect as terrifying as the other possibility of his taking revenge for his damaged honour. This sudden panic had the result of making her desert Marie Louise's Court when it set out for Blois, and to fly for protection to her mother.

And there Josephine and the ladies who had stood by her, and Hortense and her one lady-in-waiting, remained, unable to guess what was going to happen next, not knowing what to do. There was not a single man in the house to whom they could turn for advice. All the news they could gather came through the newspapers, and they, of course, were the least reliable guides that could be found. Still there was no suspicion in Josephine's mind that the Empire could fall, that Napoleon might be exiled, and that she herself would lose her position of Empress-Queen-Dowager. The Imperial system seemed to her too stable ever to collapse.

Then suddenly at midnight on April 10th a horseman dismounted at Navarre and thundered on

the floor. He bore a message for the Empress, he told the frightened women. Josephine was roused from sleep and he was brought into her presence. He told her briefly that Napoleon was Emperor no longer, that he was about to set forth into exile, that the Bourbons were masters of Paris, and that the old régime was about to make a new start. It was more than Josephine could understand when it was thrust upon her so suddenly. She listened stupidly, and asked the messenger to repeat his words. He did so. Then came Hortense, and between the two of them they forced the meaning of the message upon her. Her first words when she realized it were an expression of pity for Napoleon.

Next day came the inevitable re-estimation of positions. Josephine fully appreciated the fact that she was free. She could stay in France, sure of the sympathy of the people, with her yearly two millions of income that had been guaranteed by the Senate. But she was very anxious about her children. Hortense had with her her diamonds, sewn into her clothes (in those unstable days everyone carried as much portable property with them as possible), so that her daily bread was safe enough, but Hortense was a Bonaparte, and even Josephine realized that no Bonaparte could live in France under the Bourbons. As for Eugène, she knew little. His stout defence of Italy might have made him serious enemies. He was not a rich man, and he might have to spend the rest of his life under difficulties. She was borne down with anxiety on his account, and on account of her grandchildren.

At last unofficial hints came through that the

Bourbons and the Allied monarchs were not ill-disposed towards her, and she determined to go to Malmaison to be nearer Paris to watch over her family's interests. As she started a message came from the Duc de Berry, the fiercest legitimist that even the Bourbons could show, saying that he was on her side and would do all he could for her, even to the extent of providing a guard of honour. This last offer was declined, and Josephine travelled to Malmaison unguarded. Hortense, to her credit, did not accompany her. She determined to stand by the other Bonapartes, and even Alexander of Russia could not for the moment persuade her otherwise. The paragraphs in the papers announcing Josephine's arrival illustrated their present embarrassment in adjusting themselves to the new order. The only way they could describe Josephine was to call her "the mother of Prince Eugène." She was no longer Empress, and for that matter she was no longer Mme. Bonaparte. She could hardly be called Mme. de Beauharnais. Yet perhaps the *Journal des Debats* had in its difficulty hit upon the most complimentary way of referring to her.

At Malmaison marvellous things began to happen. Two days after her arrival the man who held the fate of Europe in his hand paid a call. And he was no upstart Emperor either. He could trace his decent through Imperial ancestors for three hundred years. He was young and handsome, and no one knew that Metternich's blighting cynicism would poison all his actions and cause him to waste the golden opportunity presented to him of realizing his ideals. For the moment Alexander held the position that



ALEXANDER THE FIRST OF RUSSIA
FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

President Wilson held before his arrival at Versailles—and he was to make as much use of it. He was lucky in that he remained under the spell of his illusions all his life, and in that he was not cast down from his position later. But Josephine knew nothing about such things, and cared hardly more. In Alexander's gift lay a brilliant future for Eugène, and perhaps one even for Hortense. She made herself agreeable to Alexander as much for her children's sake as for her own, and as much for what he was as for what he had to give. A word of praise lukewarm enough, perhaps, but sincere, and more than can be said of most of the characters of that period, or of others, either.

Alexander had set the example, and his toadies and hangers-on naturally followed it. The King of Prussia called, and with him were his two sons, one of whom was to receive, fifty-six years later, the surrender at Sedan of Josephine's grandchild, Napoleon III. Then came the King of Bavaria and the Grand Duke of Baden, and even Josephine's old admirer the Prince of Mecklenburg. It is even said that the Comte d'Artois, who later was to be Charles X of France, and who was to lose his throne through being too much of a Bourbon, called at Malmaison.

They came to see Josephine. They did not come because she was an Empress, or because her husband was at the head of half a million soldiers. Josephine's old ambition of queening it in a salon under a Bourbon king seemed to be realized beyond her wildest dreams. Then she had Eugène with her again, wreathed with his Italian laurels, and Hortense came too, rebuffed

by Marie Louise, who was already drifting into that treachery to her husband's cause which has damned her through history.

Happiness and worldly success turned Josephine's head a little. The security for which she had sighed in vain under the Empire at last seemed hers. Alexander had promised to do his best for Eugène at the Congress of Vienna. She was in favour at the Court of the Bourbons, and could be presented there when she wished—the Vicomte de Beauharnais had never been able to arrange that for her, in the old days. She considered the advisability of taking the title of Duchess of Navarre, just as Joseph Bonaparte had become Duc de Mortefontaine, and Louis Duc de Saint-Leu. For a brief space she forgot Napoleon utterly. Perhaps—more surely than “perhaps” can convey—she could only be happy when she could forget him. He had won her love and had raised her to an Imperial throne. To the unthinking that should imply that she should always have been grateful to him and should have remained his staunchest adherent. But the love he had won he had rejected, and the position he had conferred he had taken away. Josephine would have been a happier woman had she never received the favours with which for a time he had loaded her. She had little enough reason for gratitude, at the very moment when he was appealing to the Allies to restore him the wife he had taken in her place. And Josephine, realizing the ambitions she had cherished for forty years, could not be expected to be miserable on account of the man who had never allowed her misery to weigh in the scale against his ambitions.

So the game proceeded rapidly. Josephine advanced from triumph to triumph. Bonapartist society was at her feet; Legitimist society was beneath them. She could claim victories over Mme. de Staël as well as over the Czar and the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia. She could see herself for the rest of her life the first woman of France without bearing the burdens of royalty—just what she had hoped for fourteen years before when she had tried to induce Napoleon to accept a dukedom and the position of Peer of France in exchange for the supreme power.

But the golden dream was to remain a dream and nothing more. The negotiations which were to arrange for her presentation at Court and for her assumption of the title of Duchess of Navarre were developing favourably when Alexander suggested an excursion to Saint-Leu. It was a merry expedition, including the Czar, Eugène, Hortense, and Josephine. Josephine already had a slight cold, and she caught a worse one in the damp woods. When she came back she was suffering from the melancholy that presages influenza. She could not eat her dinner that evening, but she did her best to appear cheerful while entertaining the Czar. She struggled along all the next week, which was the worst thing she could do under the circumstances, and entertained two Emperors and a King on an evening when she ought to have been in bed. Next night she entertained the Czar and two Grand Dukes, and walked in the cold evening air with Alexander, in her thin dress.

The next development was inevitable. When Alexander called again, the night before he was due

to go to England, Josephine was in bed suffering from pneumonia and pleurisy. There was little hope for her, and her frail chance was still further reduced by a misunderstanding between the doctors and a consequent postponement of the correct treatment. Josephine was in frightful pain and was delirious at intervals. Neither influenza nor its complications were properly understood in those days, and Josephine moaned that the doctors had killed her by their incompetence. Very likely they had. On Whit Sunday, May 29th, it was obvious that she was sinking. The Sacrament was given her, and she received it eagerly. Then she died, in the arms of Eugène as he knelt by the bed, with Hortense fainting beside him.

As she died she whispered something very faintly, holding out her hand to Hortense, but what it was she said is not known for certain. Some say that it was "Napoleon—Elba," and some say it was "Napoleon—Marie Louise." But it is nearly certain her last thoughts were of the man who had won the love she found it so hard to give, and who had spurned it when he had won it.

As those words passed Josephine's lips (words as uncertain as are Napoleon's last words at St. Helena) there ended a life as strange and as changeful as any that history can show. Josephine had been a poor planter's daughter. She had been a nobleman's wife. Her husband had climbed to power and then had died a felon's death. Then for months she lay in the shadow of guillotine, and for the months that followed she lived at the service of some of the most

detestable men of the age. She had received the adoration of the man whom later she was to love too dearly, and she had received it carelessly. He raised her to the proudest throne in the world, and then cast her from it. And after he fell she was building for herself a new career when death snatched her from certain triumph. In those last days she could call up before her memories of old girlish loves; of Beauharnais, self-satisfied and coldly self-contained, breaking her heart by his brutal cruelty; of Barras, cynical and utterly disgusting; of Gohier, half-doting yet wooing her with a lawyer's caution; of the future conqueror of half the world, a boy of five and twenty swearing passionate devotion to her while she smiled in unbelief in the vows of any man; of Hippolyte Charles, for whose smiling boyishness she had risked so much; of Junot, darkly handsome, who now lay in the suicide's grave to which his madness had led him; then, later, of Napoleon again, but this time cold and hard, on the verge of divorcing her time and again, but time and again won back to her by her pleadings and her blank misery. She could remember the fierce Corsican hatred of the Bonapartes and the kindly look in Alexander's short-sighted blue eyes as he peered at her in Quixotic affection. Passion, love, triumph, and despair; she could remember all these. But not in all her life could she look back upon a period of peace.

The analysis of Josephine's character and motives is a difficult task, the more difficult in that the evidence is clouded by untruth and prejudice. To judge her is to assume responsibility that is with more decency left to a Power more competent. The

historian withdrawing the hem of his garment from her as from one whose touch means defilement is more ridiculous than he who rushes into the breach and refuses to believe a word against her. The tragedy of Josephine is based upon the situation which is the foundation of nearly every tragedy—the placing of an ordinary person in an extraordinary set of circumstances. For it is hard to believe that Josephine was other than ordinary. That is one of the reasons why it is difficult to follow her motives. Hortense and Eugène might well have had carved on the stone they set above her grave in the church at Rueil—*Tout savoir, c'est tout pardonner*. It would have been a fitting epitaph.

If she succumbed to temptation let those who have known temptation and have withstood it condemn her. If she did not, then mark it to her credit. And on the credit side can also be placed her kindness of heart, her charity, and her capacity for forgiveness. She loved her fellow-men; more than that, she loved her fellow-women. Hers are the less easily recorded virtues, gentleness and kindliness. If she gave no Code Napoleon to the world, at least she gave no Austerlitz or Borodino. She did less harm to the world than the world did to her, and the world had given her large enough opportunity, the Spirit of Pity knows, for returning evil for the evils heaped upon her.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER ALL

EXCUSES are accusations whether they are made on one's own behalf or not, and the rôle of apologist is only a shade less objectionable than that of vilifier. The man who sets out to excuse Josephine, or to do the reverse, is either insulting the intelligence of his readers, or else he is distorting the evidence. The same might be said of any subject of biography, but Josephine has suffered at the hands of more friends and enemies than she deserved. She has also suffered from people who have passed sentence upon her one way or another, who have condemned her with loathing or who have damned her with faint praise as a good woman who might easily have been better—a conclusion which would have driven her perfectly frantic had she been unfortunate enough to live to hear it.

There is no denying the fact that Josephine was a woman whose talents were such that she could hardly display them without doing herself some injury in the eye of posterity. She could dress well, but her dresses consumed the pay of fifty battalions. She could be charming, but her charms helped to cause

the Peninsular War. She could be tactful, but her tact only served to give her a career before and after her married life with Napoleon—a combination of circumstances which is displeasing to the blinder worshippers of Napoleon. These same idolaters, too, find it hard to excuse her for not loving Napoleon at a time when he needed her love, and for learning to love him only when her love was to be a positive inconvenience to him. In fact, they bear a grudge against her on this account, as if it were her fault.

Her worst sin (leaving her extravagance out of the reckoning altogether), in many people's eyes, was her acceptance of the Bourbon régime and the friendly footing on which she established herself with the victorious allies. Ethically she was perfectly right. A husband who had divorced her had no claim upon her. If Josephine had refused to recognize the Bourbons and had retired from France in high dudgeon she would have been doing more than in strict justice she need have done for her husband. Incidentally, she would have been doing him very little good, but that is beside the point. What Josephine did had ceased to have any political significance.

Similarly she was correct in having dealings with the Bourbon Court. Soult did so, and he was made Chief of the Staff on the return from Elba. Ney actually accepted a commission from Louis to fight Napoleon, and still commanded an army during the Waterloo campaign (and commanded it very badly). A casuist might even suggest that with Napoleon out of the way it was Josephine's duty as a good French-

woman to bow to the new authority and support it to the best of her ability.

Her friendship with Alexander and the others may be excused on the grounds that she was anxious about the future of her children, or about her own future, for the matter of that. It is a laudable ambition for a woman to seek to gain a principality for her son.

Excuses, excuses, excuses, there is no lack of them, and perfectly good ones too. What Josephine was really guilty of was a sin against good taste—which is really more distressing for the reader than the sins of a Catherine or a Cleopatra. It is hard to countenance actions which are positively unsportsmanlike. But when a woman is once started on a course of action it is more difficult to convince her that she is committing a breach of sporting etiquette than to convince her that she is sinning against the Holy Ghost, although the one argument may be as effective as the other if driven home.

Of Josephine's love for her husband there can be no doubt. The few letters of hers to Napoleon during the period 1800-10 that have been preserved prove it if nothing else did. Whether she strengthened her position by admitting the fact to him is much more doubtful. She did not love him in the beginning, and very probably she did not love him in the end, but she loved him most devotedly for ten years. This was the period when Napoleon had most to give her and when he gave her most, but it is hard to believe that she was consciously influenced by this. That it did influence her is certain, but Josephine's

training all her life had been such that it was bound to do so whether she thought about it or not. There is no need to decide, fortunately, as to which state of affairs shows the better character.

Josephine carried out her routine duties as Empress with scrupulous accuracy, and for Josephine to submit to routine was as big a sacrifice for her as it would be for another woman to lay down her life. And in the end she made a greater sacrifice than any—she laid down her position and her claim upon her husband. For it must be borne in mind that if Josephine had opposed the divorce with all her strength Napoleon must either have given way or must have suffered a great deal of damage to his position. George IV sank infinitely in popular estimation as a result of his attempt to divorce Caroline, and he held a position much less dependent upon popular whim than did Napoleon. But Josephine put the temptation on one side and out of her love for her husband she submitted to the loss of all she held dear. If no more than that were known about her she would go down through history on a level with the mother of the Gracchi. It is a point which raises the interesting debate as to whether if more were known about the mother of the Gracchi she would go down through history on a level with Josephine. The sacrifice is the supreme act of Josephine's life, and for it alone she is worthy of immortality. Her partisans' vague efforts to ascribe copy-book virtues to her are mere works of supererogation.

After the divorce her affection for Napoleon gradually cooled. It is hardly surprising, seeing that he had taken another woman to wife and was setting

all the extensive propagandist machinery at his disposal to work informing the world (including Josephine) how much he loved her. Most women would have come to hate him for it, but hatred was not easy for Josephine. She let him go out of her life (degrading him by this one act to the level of Barras or Gohier) and turned for other interest to her grandchildren and her toilet. It may well be that these gave her more pleasure than Napoleon ever did. It was because Napoleon had so faded out of her life that her support of the Bourbons is more readily excusable.

But it is difficult to visualize what would have happened had Josephine survived until Napoleon returned from Elba. With one wife living in adultery with a minion of Metternich, and the other committed to the side of the Bourbons, Napoleon's situation would have been strange. How he would have acted towards Josephine is more than can be imagined. How Josephine would have acted towards him is equally incapable of estimation. She might have retired to Belgium with Louis, or she might have joined the throng of women who pulled the fleur-de-lis from the furniture in the Tuileries to expose the Napoleonic bees underneath. Whatever it was, one may be sure that some would be found condemning her action while others proved it to be a sure sign of her more than saintly goodness.

The malicious little tales that are told of her hardly affect one's opinion of Josephine one way or the other. There is de Bausset's story of how he helped Napoleon carry Josephine to her room after

she had fainted when Napoleon told her of his decision to divorce her. De Bausset declares that while he was carrying her Josephine revived for an instant unknown to her husband, told him (de Bausset) that his sword-hilt was hurting her, and then relapsed into unconsciousness before Napoleon realized what had happened. The story is very likely true. It may have happened just as he says, without any further implication. In that case de Bausset is hardly to be blamed for seizing the opportunity for implying the rest and making an amusing little story out of it to decorate his rather tame memoirs. But perhaps Josephine really was shamming. If she was, it does not affect the fact that she submitted to the divorce, and proved that her love was more genuine than her surprise at its being spurned.

Josephine lived and loved and suffered and died, just as do all mortals. It was hardly her doing that more interest should be taken in the way she did these things than was the case with millions of other women, and perhaps she would not have chosen to have it so had the choice ever been offered her. It did not please her that the fate of Europe might depend upon her actions; whatever her foibles, megalomania was not one of them. She never sought more than a little more than she had already.

Her love brought her sorrow, and never in her life did she know the peace she yearned for. In the bitter lines

Yet peace have they that none may gain who live,
And rest about them that no love can give—

Swinburne might almost have been alluding to her as well as to Tristram and Iseult. She was as much a Guinevere as the men who moulded her life were Arthurs. That is a title to fame, not to infamy.

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